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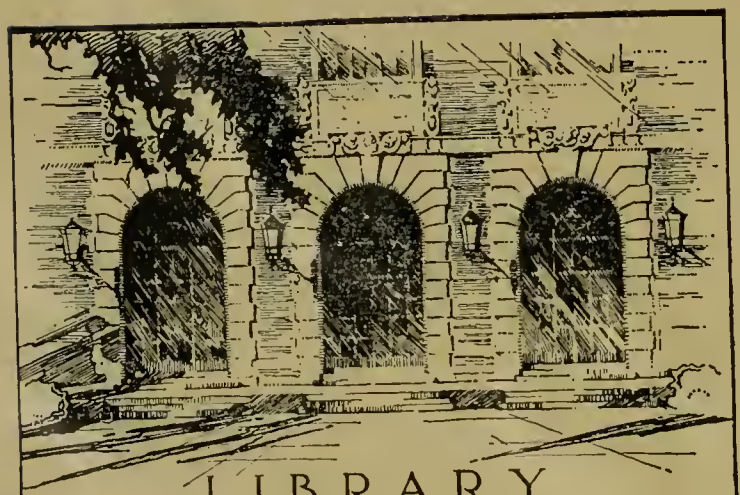

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# MORLEY ASHTON.

# MORLEY ASHTON:

## A Story of the Sea.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "FAIRER THAN A FAIRY," ETC.

In Three Volumes.

VOL. II.

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# MORLEY ASHTON.

## CHAPTER I.

### MARIQUITA ESCUDERO.

After the breathless calm of the past day, the heat of the cabin was intense. The lamp was trimmed and lit by the steward, but the skylight was still kept open.

"Awfully hot, Morley, is it not?" said Tom Bartelot, as he threw off his jacket.

"Yes; and the heat makes one so thirsty, too!"

"I can't give you iced champagne, as in the gardens at Rio; but the steward has bitter beer, beaujolais, and potash water, with grog for you, Morrison, which I know you prefer; and you, too, Noah, my old Triton. And now let us to work, and overhaul the old man's papers."

Morrison, who had been scanning over the manuscript, helped himself to a glass of grog mechanically,

without taking his eyes from the writing. Noah Gawthrop, who had been specially invited below, in virtue of the part he had borne in the past day's episode, received a jorum of stiff grog from the steward, and seated himself near the bulkhead, uncomfortably, on the extreme edge of a sea-chest, in preference to the well-cushioned locker, which he evidently considered too fine for his tarry trousers.

Morley and Bartelot were each furnished with a glass of beaujolais and potash water. The stars were visible through the open skylight, paling away into the blue ether overhead, when Morrison began to read, translating the recluse's Spanish into tolerable English, as he made himself master of the subject; the sole interruptions, as he proceeded, being an occasional interjection from Noah, such as "Dash my buttons!" "Smite my timbers!" varied by "Darn my eyes! the ragamuffin! the regular-built old Bluebeard!" followed by a hard slap of his hand upon his own thigh; though much of what he heard proved a sore puzzle to him, especially the religious invocations, the outbursts of remorse, and bitter self-reproaches, which we omit in the rehearsal of his story.

The manuscript proceeded thus:

"I pray the reader hereof, if he be a good Catholic, to say a novena, or nine days' prayer, for the repose of my sinful soul; and I beg of the first Christian

man who shall give my remains interment to place a cross at the end of my grave.

"Let whoever beholds these poor remains profit by the sad spectacle they exhibit, even as the recluse, Brother Pedro, has sought to profit by the prayers, penance, and mortification of twenty years spent in this solitude, while striving to atone for the errors of forty spent in the world as Don Pedro Zuares Miguel de Barradas.

"I was a man of fortune in New Spain; my forefathers were of the purest blood—the boasted *blue* blood of those who dwelt by the Ebro, without taint of Goth, of Moor, or Jew—and my more immediate predecessors, men who came with Hernan Cortez, of Medellin, and Francis Pizarro, of Troquillo, to conquer the new world which Columbus had given to Castile and Leon.

"My direct ancestor, Don Miguel de Barradas, came from San Pedro de Arlanza, in the district of Burgos. A near kinsman of Hernan Cortez, he was one of the first who settled on the table-land of Anahuac, founding one of those powerful families which flourish there, and who also possess all the sea-coast, from La Vera Cruz to San Luis de Potosi.

"In power and right of action, we were free and unfettered, as the Spanish nobility at home. No agrarian law could there force us to sell our vast estates, if we neglected to cultivate them; and our

farmers we could harass, oppress, cajole, or expel at our pleasure.

"Proud of my descent from one of those who conquered Tlascala and Tenochtitlan in 1521, no man was more vain of his old Castilian pedigree than I; yet there came a time when I joined the patriots, and fought for the separation of Peru from the mother country, and, with my own blood, sought to cement the foundation of the free United States of South America.

"Prior to my entering upon that career of usefulness, my objects in life were very different.

"I was possessed of vast wealth; I had been well educated and highly accomplished by my parents, at whose desire I had travelled over all Europe, and had visited its capitals, to the improvement of my taste, though but little to the advantage of my morals.

"I was possessed of a person that was considered handsome. I deemed myself a model and mirror of honour, and had a spirit ever high and haughty, but at times crafty and ferocious. My character was full of inconsistencies; thus, wherever I went, I became involved in quarrels on frivolous pretexts and points of honour—quarrels, which invariably ended in duels, and in these I was generally the victor, whether with sword or with pistol, for I was skilful in the use of both.

"Within this shadow was a darker shade!

"No man's wife or daughter—even were he my best and dearest friend—could be safe from my artful, insidious, and too often successful advances; for to see any woman, possessed of even moderate attractions, was to love her at once.

"Success in each instance gave new courage and address, and led to success in others; thus my whole time was spent in weaving plans and intrigues, and the chief aim of my existence was to feel myself the conqueror. Thus to flame succeeded flame, so rapid were my fancies, so insatiable my desires, that I rejoiced in the idea of making three or four assignations with as many different beauties in one day.

"Opposition in some, the tears, the reproaches, and the despair of others, added but piquancy to this pursuit of the innocent and unwary, while my hand with the small sword was so skilful and steady, my aim with the pistol so deadly and true, that relations and rivals sought to punish me in vain, though thrice I escaped miraculously their attempts at deliberate assassination.

"Of all whom I deceived none do I mourn more in this time of repentance and bitterness, than Mariquita Escudero, whose image and memory fill me yet—even at the distance of many years—with inexpressible sorrow.

"She was the only daughter of Miguel Escudero,

a worthy old farmer of mine, near Orizaba—that mighty volcano, whose summit is 1,300 feet higher than the Peak of Teneriffe, and which serves as a landmark to all mariners bound for La Vera Cruz.

"Though tainted, as we deemed it, with the Mexican blood of her mother, who was an octoroon of a native tribe, Mariquita inherited from her father good old Castilian blood, and was a girl far exceeding all whom I had met or known in loveliness and goodness, in virtue and in purity.

"She had heard of my evil reputation, and warned by common rumour—it may be by her parents, or inspired by native modesty—she always drew her mantilla close, and shunned or avoided me, when I visited Orizaba.

"Piqued by her coldness and inflamed by her beauty, which was of a very remarkable kind, I relinquished, or forgot for the time, every other amour, to engage in this new one, proceeding to work warily, and with all the subtlety of the fiend I was then.

"Though I frequently visited the *granja* (farm) of old Miguel Escudero, I ceased to notice, save by a casual bow, the presence of Mariquita; but strove assiduously to gain the friendship of her brother, Juan, a handsome and high-spirited young man, whom, as he was a deadly shot and good swords-

man, I thought it would be as well to remove from the vicinity of my operations.

"I might easily have had him taken off, by distributing a few dollars among the bandidos of the Barranca Secca; but, though wicked enough, I was not sufficiently a villain for that, and so preferred to procure for him a commission as an *alferez* (ensign) in the guards of the castle of San Juan de Ulloa, an honour which, being so unusual, when conferred on the son of a humble *grangero*, or farmer, filled the soul of Miguel with gratitude, and Juan with pride and joy.

"Not content with this, I appointed Escudero overseer of all my estates, with an income of about five hundred pistoles per annum; so my cold little beauty, the Senora Mariquita, had now a horse and mounted groom when she went abroad, instead of a mule, as before, and a barefooted negro runner.

"These presents—this unwonted patronage—passed well enough as rewards to an ancient and faithful adherent of our house, for old Miguel Escudero had been an especial confidant of my father, and was descended from one of the twenty men-at-arms whom my ancestor, Don Miguel, had brought from San Pedro de Arlanza in Old Castile. He regarded me with a friendship, a love, that was almost paternal, and now pressed me to visit him at the handsome residence which my favour and

bounty had conferred upon him; so I went to spend three months under the same roof with Mariquita, on the slopes of the vast Pic d'Orizaba, to hunt the wild cattle, the elks, the buffaloes, and cabri, and the grisly black bears, in the ever green forests and lovely savannahs that spread away from thence towards the Rio de Carraderas; and, nightly, it was my joy to lay the spoils of the chase at the feet of Mariquita, in compliment to her as the mistress of her father's house, for such she was—luckily, for the furtherance of my project, her watchful mother having been recently removed by death.

"I now saw more of her than I could ever have done by periodical visits, and my passion grew greater by our intimacy, for the girl was a wondrously lovely brunette, though her skin was exceedingly fair. The form of her hands and feet, the contour of her head, and the soft luxuriant masses of her ripply black hair, were all perfect; and her eyes, large, dark, clear, and liquid, were beautiful, and ever varying in expression.

"I was too artful, too well trained in the ways of vice, to seem more than simply pleased with the society of Mariquita. I was scrupulously attentive to her at table and elsewhere. If she mounted, my hand and knee were at her service; but when dismounting, she always preferred the attendance of her father, or her old negro groom, as if determined

that no hand of mine should ever touch her slender waist.

"We occasionally accompanied each other on the guitar. Songs of love were long, long avoided, but they came at last. I remember the first we ventured on—'Love's First Kiss,' an old song of Burgos, beginning:

"'A aquel caballero madre.'

And then came a time, too, when I saw that Mariquita ceased to avoid me—a time when her cheek flushed palpably, and when her lovely eyes dilated and sparkled at my approach with emotions of pleasure there were no concealing.

"In me she beheld her father's patron and benefactor, her brother's friend; so gratitude soon led the way to love.

"I beheld the growth of this secret influence with exultation, yet never spoke of love. Inspired by my master, the devil, I was too wary yet to mar my game until she loved me irretrievably and deeply. My efforts, my passion, were about to be rewarded at last!

"For good or for evil, to what is a man most indebted for success in life? To genius, birth, education, or perseverance? To none of these, but simply to success itself.

"Alas! she was too young, too tender, and too artless—too full of keen Spanish and generous

Indian impulses, to withstand me; and after a time I saw that she burned with a passion equal to my own, which I still pretended to suppress within me, and to veil under an outward aspect of indifference and respect.

"'The first symptom of true love in a young man is timidity; in a girl it is boldness,' says a writer. 'This will surprise, and yet nothing is more simple: the two sexes have a tendency to approach, and each assumes the qualities of the other.'

"This strange analysis of the human heart was fully realised in the case of Mariquita.

"One day we were riding at the foot of the vast Cordillera, through those odoriferous groves, the leaves of which are used for perfuming the chocolate. We had contrived to miss our black groom, who had dismounted in a part of the wood, to examine a shoe of his horse; so, as the atmosphere of noon was intensely hot and breathless, we sought a shady and sequestered spot, where, under the cool, humid, and umbrageous forest leaves, the smilax or sarsaparilla roots, the liquidambar, the choacun root, and the balsam of tolu were growing in luxuriance, and where the wild cotton tree, and the broad-leaved tobacco plant, the yellow gourd, and the purple grape, all formed a jungle together.

"Languid and panting with the heat of the day, the length of our ride, and, inspired by the pleasure

she now felt in my society, Mariquita never looked so lovely ; and now, when praying that she would alight, strange to say, I spoke timidly and with a wildly-beating heart ; but, to my surprise, she consented, and held out her hand with a delightful smile.

"As I lifted her from the saddle, she threw back her long low veil, and the heavy masses of her perfumed hair fell upon my cheek.

"She leant heavily forward in my arms, and, instead of placing her on the ground, I pressed her tenderly to my breast, with my lips trembling on her forehead. Then I murmured in her ear :

"'Mariquita, *mi querida*—Marguerita, my idol—I love you—love you dearly ! Will you pardon me ; will you permit it ? '

"She did not reply, but her head sank upon my shoulder, for the crisis had come ! Her lovely face was close to mine, and I felt her breath upon my cheek. The colour had left hers, for those emotions which cause some women to blush make others grow pale ; but her half-closed eyes sparkled with passion and joy under their long black lashes, and her rosy lips were parted by a divine smile.

"I felt that I had triumphed ; that Mariquita, the once proud, cold, and reserved Mariquita, loved me, for that emotion which had made me at first seem timid now made her actually bold, and her

sweet lips sought mine, it may be but too readily, in the first glow of her girlish ardour.

"She gave me one long and passionate kiss, and then, without assistance, she sprang from my arms to her saddle, saying, with mingled smiles and tears:

"'We have both been foolish — very foolish, Senor Don Pedro, but let us begone.'

"'Mariquita, consider the heat—your fatigue!' I urged.

"'We are some miles from the *granja*, and have first the road to find,' she replied hurriedly.

"With her horse's reins and her whip, she had resumed something of her former self, but the memory of my kisses yet burned upon her brow and lips. I endeavoured, in vain, to lead the conversation back to the sudden impulse which the simple act of dismounting had given to both our hearts.

"I begged of her to moderate the pace of her horse, as there was plenty of time for us to reach home; but she would not listen to me, and seemed to blush with anger now at the memory of what had passed between us; yet little cared I for that. I felt assured that we had passed the Rubicon, that this beautiful girl loved me, and that the time I had spent with old Miguel Escudero, in rambling among his plantations, where the negroes hoed the

sugar, planted tobacco, and gathered the cotton tufts, had not been spent in vain.

"Mariquita did not avoid me, so for several days after this I never missed an opportunity, especially when old Senor Escudero was not present, of pressing my suit, and giving her assurances of my unalterable love! Unalterable! Oh, *mal hayas tu*, Pedro de Barradas, into how many charming ears had those same words been poured, and in the same tender accents, too!

"But Mariquita, who had become more mistress of herself, always heard me with composure, and with a bearing unlike that she had exhibited in the wood; but I could see that the simplest remark, or most casual tone of my voice, made her heart vibrate with pleasure, and her colour deepen.

"One evening we were standing together at an open window, which was shaded by a vine-covered verandah, and faced the usually flaming summit of the volcano of Orizaba. It was wonderfully still on that occasion; a column of thin smoke only ascended from it to the very zenith. The evening was lovely, and the sun's farewell rays were gilding the mighty summit of the cone; all was calm and quiet, save in our hearts, which beat tumultuously. I drew closer to Mariquita, and as she stood before me, I passed my arms round her, kissed the back of her delicate neck tenderly, and whispered:

"'How long shall I speak to you of love, Mariquita?'

"'As long as you please, Senor Don Pedro,' she replied, with a tender smile, as she half turned round her head.

"'Call me Pedro, my beloved one, without the ceremonious don—and senor, too, oh, fie!'

"'*Bueno—Pedro mi querida.*'

"'Sweeter still!' I exclaimed, in a low voice.

"'Well?'

"'Well, dearest Mariquita; how long shall we speak of love?'

"'As long as you please.'

"'Ah! feel how my heart beats. I ask how long in vain?'

"'Long enough, senor,' said she, with a pretty pout.

"'*Senor!*'

"'Yes, senor, unless—unless——'

"She paused.

"'What?'

"'You speak of marriage, too,' she replied, suddenly unclasping my hands, which were tenderly folded round her slender waist.

"'Do you love me?'

"'Do I love you?' she repeated, reproachfully, turning her full, clear, and glorious eyes to mine, while throwing back her veil and the masses of her

silky hair together; 'you know that *I do love you*, Pedro, fondly, deeply, passionately, for you have won that which never belonged, and never shall belong, to another—my heart.'

"'Beloved Mariquita!' I exclaimed, and pressed her to my breast in a long and mutual embrace, 'and you will be mine—mine?'

"'At the foot of the altar, Pedro—at the foot of the altar alone,' she whispered, with a heart that swelled with love, and with dark eyes steeped in languor.

"But vain are human resolves, even when made by a heart so pure and guileless as that of Mariquita, when struggling with a passion so deep and consuming; for with these very words on her lips she was yielding; we were alone and undisturbed, and ere the sun's last rays had faded from the cone of Orizaba, Mariquita had lost her honour!

* * * * *

"The hapless Mariquita! She loved me more than ever now. She clung to me with all the strength of love, of sacrifice, and of despair.

"For days after this, on her knees, she besought me to marry her. I would raise her, kiss and console her, and flatter, too—how weary now the task!—flatter and pacify her, making countless promises and professions, for I still loved her in my own selfish fashion; but I shrunk from the idea of

marriage with the daughter of one of my own *grangeros*—one whose ancestors had been hewers of wood and drawers of water to mine—a girl, moreover, who had the taint of native blood iu her veins!

"I, Pedro de Barradas, Knight of Santiago de Compostella, and Lord of Anahuac, whom the proud daughters of the first men, and of the noblest houses in New Spain, had failed to lure within the meshes of matrimony, was not likely to mate with the daughter of Miguel Escudero, however much I might love her, and however much she might please my somewhat fastidious eye.

"I heard her many tender and pathetic entreaties—and once, too, her wild threats of self-destruction, poniard in hand—that I would save her from impending shame; but I was pitiless as the ocelot—the tiger-cat that lurked in the woods of Orizaba—all the more pitiless that I knew she fondly—yes, madly—loved me.

"Weary of the endless task of seeking to console one who would not and could not be consoled, I quitted Orizaba for some months, as we were planning the revolt against the mother country, a movement which was to secure to me the captaincy of the great castle of San Juan de Ulloa, the citadel of La Vera Cruz, which mounts nearly 200 pieces of cannon, and is the key of the whole province.

"During my absence and in the fulness of time,

Mariquita had a son, born in secrecy, amid tears, shame, and sorrow. She baptised it by the name of Pedro, and sent him to a lonely *puebla* in the mountains that overlook the Barranca Secca, to be nursed by one of my people. This birth, all unknown alike to Miguel Escudero, whom I had despatched on a political mission towards the shores of the Pacific, and to his son, Juan, who was now a lieutenant of infantry at the castle of San Juan de Ulloa.

"My passion for Mariquita still existed; her love for me was greater than ever now, and she lived but for me, and in the hope that in pity, if not for love, I would espouse her still, and these hopes I was always wicked enough to fan; 'so man wrongs, and time avenges.'

"Completely in my power, surrounded by my toils, the victim of my wiles, still loving me dearly and desperately, and still hoping for the ultimate fulfilment of my thousand protestations, the poor girl continued to meet me from time to time in a deserted sugar-mill on the mountains of Orizaba, a secret intercourse that ended fatally for her and for all, for another son, whom we named Zuares, was born, and at the same time the whole affair came to the knowledge of Miguel Escudero, who, though but a humble *grangero*, had all the pride of birth, and more than the ideas of spotless honour, honesty,

and female purity, possessed by any grandee of old Castile.

"The poor old man's horror was beyond all description.

"To find that his daughter's honour had been lost, his hospitality so infamously violated, his home disgraced, his prospects ruined, and by me—ME, whom he had so loved and so respected, as his friend and benefactor, was a mortal stab too deep to survive, and within an hour after the revelation came upon him in all its stunning details, poor Miguel Escudero had ceased to exist.

"He did not die by his own hand, he was too good and too religious a man for such a terrible act; but sinking on the floor of his chamber, he never moved again. He died of autopsy—paralysis of the heart!

"I was not present at this scene of horror, being, fortunately for myself, in command of the great castle of San Juan de Ulloa.

"On the day of Corpus Christi, after having attended mass, I was walking on that portion of the ramparts which faces the flats of Gallega, accompanied by some of the officers of my staff, when the young lieutenant, Juan Escudero, approached to inform me, in a voice broken with grief, of his father's sudden death, and to request leave of absence to attend his obsequies.

"My heart was struck with remorse, and grew sick with shame. I placed my purse in his hand; I gave him my best horse, and bade him begone to Orizaba with good speed; but I trembled like a craven in my soul for the hour of his return.

"A few days passed, and the young lieutenant came back.

"I was walking alone on the same ramparts when I saw him steadily approaching me. He was clad in his uniform, and his silver epaulettes glittered in the sun. He had a band of crape on his right arm, and another on the hilt of his sword—a soldier's simple mourning for a lost parent, and, alas! a lost honour.

"He came straight up to me; his handsome face, so like the face of Mariquita, was deadly pale; but the glare of wild hate shone in his eyes, and his nether lip quivered spasmodically.

"'Senor Don Pedro de Barradas,' said he, saluting me, ceremoniously, 'I have the honour to confess the many services you have rendered my family in the days when you were true to yourself and to us. For all these I beg to thank you. But I have also to confess the many deep wrongs you have done us, and I here brand you, before God and man, as a villain and a coward, whom I have vowed to kill like a dog, here on the ramparts of San Juan de Ulloa!'

" My heart sank, and my hand trembled.

" ' Senor Teniente—Senor Escudero,' I began, in a rash and vague attempt to explain or to extenuate; but the brother of Mariquita was mad with ungovernable fury, and he rushed upon me, sword in hand.

" I knew that he would kill me without mercy, and that there was nothing left for me but to defend my life to the utmost, and to do this all my skill was requisite.

" I was the best swordsman in La Vera Cruz; but he was twenty years my junior, young, active, and filled with just rage and indignation.

" Compelled to stand on my own defence, my sole object was to ward off his cuts, to parry his thrusts, and to keep him at bay till the castle guard came to separate us. I sought to disarm, and if driven to sore extremity to wound him only; but while he was making a desperate lunge at me, my sword entered his heart. I felt its hot blood spout upon the blade, and pour through the hilt upon my hand, as I flung my weapon down in grief and dismay.

" Juan threw up his hands, and uttered a wild cry. It was ' Mariquita,' as he fell dead on his face, at my feet.

" Long, long did a horror of these events oppress me. I buried him in the church of the Augustine

Friars, and had one hundred masses sung for the repose of his soul—oh, who will say one for me!—I would have made some effort to requite the living victim of my wickedness; but now retribution came upon me.

"Mariquita was still living at her father's old *granja*, on the borders of the Barranca Secca, in shame and seclusion, nursing her children, Pedro and Zuares, who now bore the dishonoured name of Barradas, and each of whom had, strange to say, a little red cross, like that of Santiago, on his left shoulder, where their mother's hand engraved it, lest the children should be lost.

"About a month after Juan's death, I was betrayed by some of his friends into the hands of the troops of his Majesty Ferdinand VII., and was placed by them on board a vessel for conveyance to Spain, where an ignominious death as a traitor awaited me.

"When passing near this isle, a heavy gale came on, and I fell overboard. In such a sea, to save me was impossible; but a sailor heard my shriek of despair, and cast over to me a hencoop.

"God, in his goodness, enabled me to reach it, and after drifting on the dark ocean for more than an hour, I was cast ashore, and here have I remained ever since, leading a life of piety and austerity, of penance and of prayer, in the humble and earnest

hope that this imitation of the holy men of old may atone for the errors I committed in the world as Don Pedro Zuares Miguel de Barradas.

*"Rueguen a Dios por el."*

Such was the substance of this strange confession, which we have written out in a more readable and coherent form than Morrison found it, and which throws a light on the parentage and origin of the two dark seamen on board the *Hermione*; and as for the fate of the hapless Mariquita, the reader has already learned it from Captain Hawkshaw's unpleasant reminiscence of the Barranca Secca.

The evening of the next day saw the *Princess* steering for the north-western extremity of the island of Tristan d'Acunha. At nine o'clock, Bartelot ordered a light to be hoisted at the end of the foretopmast studdingsail boom, and a gun to be fired, as a signal for a shore boat, which promptly came off from this remarkable place.

As he wanted fresh water, the captain continued to stand off and on till dawn next day, when Morley, who had spent the morning watch in successful fishing, had the gratification of seeing the sun rise on the isle of Don Tristan d'Acunha.

Situated far amid the lonely waves of the Southern Atlantic, at the distance of 1,500 miles from any continent, this lofty island has a peak of 5,000 feet

in height above the level of its beach. At dawn it seemed like a cone of flame, shaded off by purple tints, and towering amid a rose-coloured sea, whose depth is so vast that it far exceeds even the height of Tristan's loftiest peak.

Two islands are near it: one is named the Inaccessible; the other, the island of the Nightingale; but they are mere masses of wild storm-beaten rock, against which the ocean rolls its masses of foam, and above which, in the amber-tinted sky, a cloud of sea-hens, petrels, and albatrosses wheel and flutter.

In the little town which held a British garrison when our imperial captive pined in St. Helena, there is a mixed population of English and Portuguese mulattoes, though the isle is described in a recent gazetteer as being as desolate as when the Cavalier Tristan d'Acunha traversed the southern sea with his high-pooped caravel, and gave the place his name, in the first years of the sixteenth century.

Morley, Gawthrop, and three of the crew went ashore in the jolly-boat to procure some fresh water and vegetables. Morrison followed in the quarter-boat; both returned in about an hour, and after what they had brought off was put on board, they were sent ahead with a warp to tow the ship off the land, towards which a dangerous current had been drifting her.

A fine breeze soon after sprang up; the *Princess* bore away upon her course, and ere midnight came down upon the sea, she had bade a last farewell to the lofty isle of Tristan d'Acunha.

When next we see her on the ocean, we shall have something to narrate very different from the hitherto peaceful and prosperous voyages of Bartelot and his shipmates.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CREW OF THE "HERMIONE" DISCONTENTED.

For days Captain Hawkshaw was haunted by the recollection of that strange episode, the sinking corpse; whose features—seen through the fevered medium of his own imagination and his guilty conscience—seemed to assume the likeness of Morley Ashton, as they went slowly down through the green, translucent sea, after Dr. Leslie Heriot had attached the cannon-shot to its heels.

He accounted for the exclamation of horror that escaped him, by saying to those in the boat that he felt a sudden qualm of sickness, of disgust, or a giddiness; and his first resource when on board was to Joe, the captain's steward, for his brandy bottle.

When he began to reason with himself, however, in a calmer moment, he perceived the impossibility of the remains being those of Morley Ashton, as no influence of current, tide, or wind could have drifted them from the coast of Britain so far through the ocean as the South Atlantic.

The idea was absurd—impossible!

Moreover, the drowned man had not been dead more than a week to all appearance; and then his hands had grasped a life-buoy, evincing that he must have fallen overboard from some ship, or been the victim of a wreck.

When the impression of that affair began to wear away, his fears of the two Barradas, and a recollection of the manner in which Pedro, Bill Badger, the bulky Yankee, and others of the crew had insulted him, resumed their sway; but after a time he began to take courage.

"What have I to fear from the Barradas? Nothing!" he would whisper to himself, as if to gather comfort from the echo of his own thoughts. "Suppose they denounce me to my friends—to Ethel—I have simply to deny, and that is all. The story of the padre—d——nation!—no, I mean of the Barranca Secca—I have already told, and Master Zuares does not shine in that affair. Even to Ethel it is nothing new, for I have related it more than once, to increase her horror of the Barradas when the crisis comes."

A *crisis* was coming, which the captain did not quite foresee!

"Even to Ethel it is nothing new—I can deny, deny, and defy them all. 'Tis only my word against theirs."

This was all very well; but ere the voyage ended there occurred several events, which alike put the captain's courage and resolution to flight.

As the *Hermione* approached the Cape of Good Hope, she encountered alternate storms and calms, with weather so unusually cold for the season, that Hawkshaw had a fair excuse for permitting his whiskers and moustache to resume their wonted aspect of luxuriance, as he had ceased to hope for concealment on board.

Though pretty well inured now, by their very protracted voyage, to the discomforts of ship-life, Ethel and Rose Basset remained a good deal in the cabin, especially the former, to avoid Hawkshaw's attention, which were thus repressed by the presence of the captain, when it was not his watch, of Mr. Quail, or her father, who preferred to lie reading or lounging on the cabin locker, to facing on deck the spoon-drift that flew over the lee quarter when the ship was going free.

She found Adrian Manfredi, the young Italian mate, a pleasant companion, for Rose rather absorbed the society of Dr. Heriot. He was gentlemanly and well bred; he had seen much of the world, and her preference for him was so decided, that Hawkshaw felt at times a pang of jealous rage in his heart, which was in no way soothed when, in the mate's hours of leisure, they

took to reading together in Italian, "I Promessi Sposi," the beautiful novel of Alessandro Manzoni, from the neat little three-volume edition, printed at Lugano.

This emotion became all the more bitter after Ethel gave Manfredi a handsome gold locket, to hold the hair of his little brother, "the brave boy, Attilio," whose story he told in a previous chapter.

The young man was no doubt charmed by the beauty and society of a sweet English girl like Ethel Basset; thus his voice became mellow and soft whenever he addressed her, and his eyes sparkled with admiration and pleasure whenever he saw her, but beyond this, no sign of a deeper emotion escaped him. Perhaps he felt the folly or futility of encouraging it.

On the other hand, Ethel's preference for him was greatly induced by some real or imaginary resemblance which she saw, or thought she saw, in his features to those of Morley Ashton; though Rose and her father failed to perceive it, and Hawkshaw, who always trembled in his soul at the young man's name, treated the idea with angry ridicule.

The sullenness and other growing peculiarities in the bearing of the crew had been increasing, so that some would scarcely obey those orders necessary for the working of the ship. Captain Phillips, though full of anxiety for the probable issue, resolved to

forbear until a ship of war hove in sight, or until he could dismiss some and put others in prison, if this state of matters still continued, when the *Hermione* hauled up for Table Bay.

One day Adrian Manfredi had charge of the deck.

The ship was running nearly fair before a fine top-gallant breeze; there was not much of a sea on, but the sky was lowering, and a great gray bank of cloud was resting on the ocean to the northward, for they were encountering regular Cape weather now.

Manfredi was conversing with Ethel from time to time, and she was still busy with the last volume of "I Promessi Sposi," when one of the crew, named Samuel Sharkey, a coarse, square stump of a fellow, having great misshapen hands, a large and very ugly visage, came deliberately aft, with a short black pipe in his mouth, and stood near her, puffing with great coolness, and eyeing her with a very admiring leer.

Ethel glanced at him uneasily, and removed to a seat nearer the taffrail, for there was cool insolence in the man's sinister eyes and bearing which alarmed her very much.

On this, Sharkey, the seaman, gave a peculiar whistle, to which Bill Badger, the tall, ungainly Yankee, who was at the wheel, responded; and these signals now attracted the attention of Manfredi, who had been looking aloft, and securing some of the halyards to the belaying-pins.

"Hollo, you sir!" said he, "what do you want aft, eh?"

"None o' your grand airs, Mister Manfreddy," was the sulky response, "'cos they won't do in this part o' blue water, so I tells you at once."

"Take that pipe out of your mouth; remember that you are on the quarter-deck, and there is a lady here."

"That is just what brought me aft. Are you chaps and the cabin passengers a goin' to keep the gals—the old judge's darters—all to yourselves? I don't mean to offend you, marm; oh, not at all, by no manner o' means," he continued, making a mock bow to Ethel; "but, shiver my topsails, if, mayhap, we won't be better acquainted afore we sights Maddygascar and the gut of the Mosambique Channel—ha, ha!"

And as he concluded he continued to leer at Ethel.

"You are drunk, fellow," said Manfredi, who was resolved to keep his temper, if possible, for the man's words contained in them a reference to ultimate views sufficiently daring to excite alarm.

"I am no more a feller than you are, mayhap not so much," replied Sharkey, taking his huge square hands out of his trousers pockets and proceeding to clench them very ominously; "and as for being two or three cloths in the wind, 'taint the six-water grog

as we gets aboard o' this 'ere beastly craft as will make me so."

"Go forward, I command you, or by Heaven I'll throw you overboard," said Manfredi, in a hoarse voice.

"If you want to swim, there may be two as can play at that," responded the ugly seaman; "but I knows summut easier in seamanship, and I would advise you to l'arn it."

"What is it?"

"To run ten knots an hour right *in the wind's eye*, with everything set that will draw, aloft and alow, skyscrapers, moonrakers, and all."

"My dear Miss Basset, I beg of you to excuse this scene, and permit me to lead you below," said Manfredi, with an agitated manner, to Ethel, who had listened to all this with great dismay.

"My dear, don't do nothin' o' the sort; just stay here and see how I'll rib-roast him," said Sharkey.

"Go forward, you gallows lubber!" thundered Manfredi, growing pale with a passion which he strove to repress, lest he should terrify Ethel, between whom and this seaman he interposed.

Sharkey, instead of complying, put his right hand behind him, and suddenly drew forth a sheath-knife —one of those ugly weapons which few seamen are now without. Armed with this, he was about to make a rush at Manfredi, when the latter, quick as

thought, and as if he had anticipated some such catastrophe, snatched up a heavy iron marlinespike and hurled it full at Sharkey's head, with such force and unerring aim that he was knocked down, senseless and bleeding, with a severe wound on the head.

"Carry the scoundrel forward, and drench him well with salt water, to bring him to," said Manfredi, while panting with excitement, to the Barradas and some of the crew who had run aft. He took the knife from Sharkey's relaxed hand, and threw it into the sea, adding, "I will serve every man who disobeys me now in the same fashion, and tow him overboard for twenty knots at the end of a line, if the captain will allow me."

"Mayhap as you won't," growled Sharkey, recovering a little, as he was lifted up by his sulky and muttering messmates; "and if you don't repent this work *afore to-morrow morning*, you infernal Hytalian, my name ain't Sam Sharkey!"

That some general outbreak among the crew was on the *tapis*, and might have taken place but for his own resolute conduct, Manfredi had not a doubt.

With his face covered with blood, the mutineer was carried forward, and Dr. Heriot (whom Ethel's scream when she beheld the scuffle had brought on deck) with others, hastened to the forecastle to examine the wound and have it dressed.

The marlinespike, an iron instrument that tapers

like a pin, and is used for separating the strands of rope when splicing or marling, had inflicted a severe wound on the forehead of Sharkey, and the blood was flowing freely from it.

He growled and swore, using fearful oaths and threats, while Heriot, bathed, dressed, and bandaged the gash. Captain Phillips threatened to have him put in irons till the ship reached Cape Town; but as the wound was severe, he permitted him to remain in his berth in the forecastle bunks, where his shipmates remained to console him, and hear his reiterated threats of revenge.

Manfredi apologised to Ethel for the alarm he had unwittingly caused her, but added that no other course was left him but to strike the ruffian down, to preserve his own life and authority.

Quiet Mr. Quail made a due entry of the event among his columns of "remarks" in the ship's log, while Mr. Basset waxed warm at the affair, and expounded learnedly and as became a new-fledged judge, on the law relating to merchant seamen, quoting Shee's edition of "Lord Tenterden," and so forth with great fluency.

So generous and forgiving was Manfredi, that, at lunch time, he sent boy Joe, the captain's steward, forward with a tot of brandy to the patient in the forecastle, and the amiable Mr. Sharkey drank it to the last drop, with a fearful invocation of curses on

the donor's head, and thereupon dashed the wooden tot in Joe's face.

Before the first dog-watch the event was apparently forgotten; but it increased the desire of Captain Phillips to reach Cape Town and get rid of some of his crew.

## CHAPTER III.

### ROSE AND DR. HERIOT.

Supper was over in the cabin, and the little community there would soon be separating for the night, or "turning in," as it is technically named.

"How brightly the stars are shining," said Rose, as she peeped up through the skylight.

"Should you like to go on deck for a moment?" asked Dr. Heriot, in a low voice, as he hastened to her side.

"Yes—for a moment only."

"Take care of chill," said Mr. Basset, warningly.

"Take care rather of yourself, Miss Rose, and, of all things, take care of the doctor," said Captain Phillips, laughing. "Manfredi has charge of the deck; see how she is trimmed aloft. Report to me when you come down, and then I'll turn in."

Rose coloured on hearing the captain's bantering tone, as she threw a shawl over her head and shoulders, took the doctor's ready arm, and hastened up the companion-stair.

Ethel smiled sadly at her joyous and girlish sister,

for she had seen how the intimacy between the young doctor and Rose had been ripening; and she wondered, or speculated on, how they would separate when the tedious voyage was over. Then she thought of Morley Ashton, and the fatal blight that had fallen so awfully and mysteriously upon her own first love.

"Miss Basset," said Hawkshaw, rising, "would you wish——"

"To go on deck? Oh, no, thank you," said she hurriedly, anticipating and replying to his offer without looking up from "I Promessi Sposi."

Hawkshaw seated himself again, and bit his lip, while that malignant gleam which filled his eyes at times shot from them covertly and unseen.

He made one other effort to engage her in conversation, by saying, in a low voice, as he stooped over her:

"Your sad smiles, Ethel, go straight to my heart, with an effect, believe me, that is cruel—killing!"

"Why! it seems that 'I can smile, and murder while I smile,' as Shakespeare says. Is it so?"

"Bantering—bantering still—even here, when on the verge of destruction, perhaps!" muttered Hawkshaw, as he drew back with another fierce but covert gleam in his stealthy eyes, and Ethel never lifted hers again from her book, until a noise on deck aroused her.

Rose clung closely and affectionately to the doctor's arm, as they traversed the quarter-deck towards the taffrail, and turned to look at the ship, at the sky overhead, through which the wild black scud was driving, and on the mysterious world of water and of darkness, through which she was careering under a press of canvas.

Encouraged by Rose's ready accession to his request, the young man held her right hand in his, and pressed it tenderly to his heart.

There was none near them save the man at the wheel; for it was about the middle of the first watch, or nearer eleven o'clock.

Rose had a presentiment that a crisis was approaching in her relations with the young doctor. The somewhat annoying banter of Captain Phillips, the affectionate warnings of Ethel, and the praises of him so loudly sung by her old nurse, had all, in a manner, prepared her for it, as much as the steady and delicate attention he paid herself.

Nightly, when Rose retired to rest in that little cabin, which seemed so small, so very small, the first night they occupied it, Nance Folgate was wont to chant her praises of the handsome doctor.

"Lor' a mussy me!—for a Scotchman—he *is* such a sweet dispositioned youth, Miss Rose. Oh, yes! now, ain't he, miss? He gives me no end o' cordials and stuffs when I'm in low spirits, which *are* often

the case, 'specially when it blows 'ard, and the ship tumbles about. There is such a modesty in all his words and ways—now, ain't there? If I was a fine young gal like you, instead o' bein' a poor old toothless thing, I would love him, that I would, when I saw how much he loved me—he is such a nice young man, is the doctor. But why don't you answer, miss?"

If Rose did not reply to such rhapsodies as these, it was not because she disagreed with them; but her young heart was wild with pleasure, and she often affected to be asleep that she might conceal her flushing cheek on her pillow. But if the young doctor had won over the old nurse, it was just as he had won over the quiet and unaffected Mr. Quail, or anyone else, as he was a good obliging fellow, and fond of doing kind offices for all. So Rose, yielding to an irresistible impulse, assented to a *tête-à-tête* on deck, on the night in question.

After a silence of some minutes—

"How strange it is," said Rose, in her soft, sweet voice, "that amid the wind which moans through the rigging, I seem to hear the sound of bells."

"Bells?"

"Or is it from the bottom of the sea?"

"Don't say so, Rose," replied Heriot.

This sounded strange in both their ears, as he had never simply called her "Rose" before; yet the

implied familiarity was not without its novelty and charm.

"Why may I not say so?" she asked.

"It is an old superstition of our Scottish sailors that the bells of wrecks and sunken ships are rung by mysterious hands at the bottom of the sea, to announce storms and disasters."

"Ah, but you Scots are so superstitious; you live in a land of omens and ghosts, predictions and dreams, even in these fast railway times."

"Yet I would that we were in Scotland now," said Heriot, with a sigh, as he thought of the doubts and clouds that veiled the future.

"We?" repeated Rose, inquiringly, while peeping from her hood and shawl, so that the light of the binnacle lamp fell full on her sweet young face, and very beautiful the dark-eyed girl looked.

"Yes, we," reiterated Heriot, whose heart was rushing to his head as he held, unresisted, her plump little hands in his. "I wish to speak with you, Rose, to—to—I have so long desired—do you—do you care for me Rose, dear Rose?"

"Care for you!" she repeated, faintly.

"Can you love me, dear, dear Rose, as I love you?"

"Yes," said Rose, in a whisper, as her head dropped on Heriot's shoulder, and his lips were pressed on her throbbing brow, for now the great

secret was told, and all her pulses beat with a new, happiness.

A few moments of joyous silence followed. Then crossing the deck to leeward, they were more in obscurity; and fortunately for them, Manfredi at that moment went forward, so Heriot pressed Rose to his breast, and said in a low, earnest, and agitated voice:

"But Rose—my beloved Rose; to what end do I love you?—to what purpose?—how taught you love to me? We are to land you at the Isle of France, and then sail on through the Indian Seas—to leave you—leave you there, for I have no home—no settled abode."

("Papa's daughters are unlucky in their lovers," thought Rose.) She replied, however, while tears of apprehension filled her eyes:

"Why cannot you leave the ship? Sailing with it to and fro must be very tiresome."

"Leave it?"

"Yes, and live with us in the Isle of France."

"Live with you, Rose?" said Heriot, with sad perplexity.

"Settle, I mean—at least, while papa is there."

"I cannot, even if I had the means. I am bound to the owners and to Captain Phillips, for this voyage at least, unless the *Hermione* procures another medical officer."

"At Singapore?"

Heriot smiled sadly at Rose's simplicity.

"Ah, yes—that will be delightful! and if poor dear Morley Ashton, who is dead, were here with us now, how happy Ethel and we should all have been!" exclaimed Rose, while nursing herself into a mood of the most prosperous cheerfulness, as her happy young spirit soared into a bright world all her own, and Heriot caressingly slipped a ring on her "engagement" finger, whispering in her ear:

"It was my mother's, Rose—wear it, at all events, for her sake and mine."

Another kiss and the bond was sealed. Then Rose, in a tumult of joy that could only find vent in tears, hurried below, with her head inclined on Ethel's bosom, told her of all that had passed between Leslie Heriot and herself—a pretty little narrative, interspersed with hesitations, smiles, and blushes, till they were startled by the wild hubbub that reigned on deck, where a terrible catastrophe had occurred.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MAN OVERBOARD.

A SUDDEN squall, and a sea which heavily swept over the poop with a shower of blinding spray, that hissed away amidships, had first driven Rose and Heriot below, and just as they retired hand in hand, they heard the voice of Manfredi, shouting through the wild blast:

"Below there! all hands ahoy! come, tumble up to take in sail!"

Then the men were heard grumbling and swearing as they hurried half-dressed out of the forecastle bunks, to assist the watch; next followed the orders "to let go," "haul down," "clew up," amid the cracking and flapping of the canvas, as the topsails were lowered almost to the caps; the royals and topgallant sails taken off her; flying gib and studding sails all in in a twinkling, though for a time the wind howled fearfully, and the ship careered before its fierce breath almost on her beam-ends. Little more than steering canvas was left upon her, for wild and black was the Atlantic squall that had

come suddenly over her, accompanied by torrents of rain, that rattled on deck, like a tempest of rouncival peas, while ever and anon the red lightning flashed vividly at the horizon, but still the brave ship flew on.

"By the sky to-day I knew we should have a gale to-night," said Captain Phillips cheerfully, as he donned his storm-jacket of shiny oilskin, and came on deck.

> "'A mackerel sky and grey mares' tails
> Make lofty ships carry lowly sails.'

A glorious sailor is Manfredi! How smartly he had all the cloth off her. But we'll need our best umbrellas to-night."

Suddenly, from the forecastle, through the many wild sounds of the squall, there came the appalling cry:

"A man overboard! hard down! hard down!"

Other shouts followed.

"Ahoy! heave over the life buoy! mainsail to the wind! clear away a boat!"

Captain Phillips grasped his trumpet; Mr. Quail —who had just turned into his berth with his clothes on, "all standing"—Dr. Heriot, and Hawkshaw sprang on deck at this new alarm.

"Hard down with the helm!" cried Phillips; "to the braces, men! let go, and haul! Back with

the mainyard! Ready the starboard quarter boat, and cut away the life-buoy!"

The mainsail was speedily laid to the mast, though there was great danger lest, in such a gale, it might be carried away entirely, and, in the excitement of the moment, even the most sullen of that ill-assorted crew worked cheerily and well.

Alternately the huge ship rose and sank on the mighty rolling waves; and now the spray flew from stem to stern over her in white and blinding sheets, plashing over her courses, and hissing under the arched leaches of the bellying sails.

Upheaved she rose on the foaming surge one moment, to sink down into the yawning trough of the sea the next, loose spars, buckets, handspikes, and everything else adrift, going to leeward, and overboard.

A faint but despairing cry came from the waves; another followed, as the drowning man, struggling hard for existence, rose on the white, foamy crest of a wave, and then sank for ever into the black and gaping bosom of the midnight sea.

Then, after some minutes of the most painful and lingering suspense, the captain, the doctor, and others, came to the conclusion that all was over, and that the poor victim must have perished, for it was found impossible to lower a boat with safety, or with the least hope of success, in such a sea or squall.

"Fill the mainyard, Mr. Foster," said the captain to the second mate. And he sighed bitterly as he spoke, for John Phillips was a kind and good-hearted man. "God receive the poor fellow! We could do nothing more. Let the ship lie her course; muster the hands aft, please, and see who is missing."

The yard heads were filled; the vessel's bow fell off from the wind, and there was less strain upon her now, and less spray broke over her, as she tore through the sea at liberty.

Aft the mizzenmast the drenched seamen mustered.

"Boy Joe! steward! bring a lantern," said the captain.

And now, by its weird light, were to be seen the two dark and sullen Barradas; Bill Badger, the bulky and insolent Yankee; the square, squat, and ugly Sharkey, with his head bandaged up; the Messieurs Brewser, Batter, Cribbit, and others of that remarkable crew.

"Are all present, Mr. Quail" asked the captain, as the mate passed the lantern along the dripping line.

"All except *one*, sir," replied Mr. Quail, whose face wore a very ashy hue and alarmed expression.

"Who is it?"

"Mr. Manfredi, sir; he is nowhere on deck."

"'Twas his watch, was it not?" said Phillips, starting.

"Yes, sir."

"Good Heavens, can it be?" exclaimed the captain, in an agitated voice, as the threat of Sharkey occurred to him. "If there has been foul play to-night, I say woe to the perpetrator of it!"

Some one now uttered a snorting laugh in the dark.

"Let us search below," said the doctor, taking the steward's lantern, and proceeding to examine in person.

He did so, and soon returned to report that no trace of Adrian Manfredi could be found, so the crew were dismissed.

"Who was the person that called out 'Man overboard?'—who saw him last?" demanded the captain, as they descended to the cabin.

"I did, sir," said Joe the steward, as he closed the door. "I was stowing the jib in its netting with Pedro Barradas," he continued, in a low voice, as if afraid to be overheard. "Mr. Manfredi was standing on the topgallant forecastle, holding on by a rope and directing us. Our heads were stooped over our work, when all of a sudden we heard a cry. On looking one way, I saw him falling into the sea; on looking another, I saw a man in his shirt-sleeves, armed with a capstan bar, slipping down into the forecastle bunks."

"A man?" repeated the listeners.

"Did he strike him overboard?" asked the captain.

"We supposed so," replied Joe, in a whisper, and glancing furtively at the skylight.

"We."

"That is, Pedro Barradas and I. He laughed—"

"The mutinous villain!"

"And tried to stop me from shouting to put the helm down."

"Did you see the man's face?"

"No, sir."

"Who do you think he was—speak!" said Captain Phillips, perceiving that Joe, a fat, good-natured fellow, with flabby cheeks, and large boiled-looking gray eyes, hesitated through fear, "speak!"

"I am frightened, in this ship, almost to say who I thought he was."

"In this ship—right! Was it Sharkey, eh?"

The steward's teeth chattered. He again glanced fearfully at the skylight, and gave a nod in the affirmative, and the captain struck his right heel on the floor.

"There has been murder committed on board to-night; yes, a most foul murder!" he continued, turning by a mere coincidence to Hawkshaw, who, on hearing the terrible word, grew deadly pale, and trembled violently from head to foot. "Would to

Heaven that I had only half-a-dozen good hard-a-weather English seamen to keep this coloured lot in order. Even Lascars of the lowest caste were better than what we have!"

The consternation in the cabin was very great, and the conversation continued below, and the storm above, till Mr. Quail, with many unpleasant forebodings, went on deck to relieve the watch at four o'clock A.M., when the wind began to abate and the sea to go down.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE LIVID FACE.

The event of the night shed a gloom, a horror, over all in the cabin next day; nor was the alarm in the breasts of Captain Phillips and his mates in the least soothed, when it was remarked that the cook's grindstone was kept at work all the forenoon, and a most ominous sharpening of sheath and clasp-knives went on, while sundry jokes were uttered audibly about "Mister Manfreddy having gone on a visit to Mr. David Jones and Old Mother Carey, without his umbrella, too;" "and the rain a fallin' like Niagary," as Badger, the Yankee, added, with a diabolical grin.

The morning sky was gray and cloudy; a heavy sea was still on, and not a sail was in sight, so Captain Phillips swept the horizon with his telescope in vain.

At breakfast Ethel and her sister were informed that Mr. Manfredi had fallen overboard in the night, and been drowned. No hint of foul play was given them, at their father's special request; but they

wept and mourned for the poor young fellow, of whom they now recalled to memory so many pleasing traits and anecdotes; among others, the sad story of his little brother, Attilio, who had been so savagely shot by the Austrians at Pistoja.

His seat at table, his place in the cabin were empty; his face and form were no longer seen, and his step and voice were no longer heard.

The suddenness of the catastrophe seemed most difficult of realisation; and the words of Dana, in a passage of one of his works, which Dr. Heriot pointed out to Rose, came painfully and truthfully home to all their hearts.

"Death is at all times solemn, but never so much so as at sea. A man dies on shore; his body remains with his friends, and the mourners go about the streets; but, when a man falls overboard at sea and is lost, there is a suddenness in the event which gives it an air of awful mystery. Then at sea you miss a man so much. A dozen men are shut up together in a little bark upon the wide wide sea, and for months and months see no forms and hear no voices but their own; but one is suddenly taken from among them, and they miss him at every turn. There are no new forms or faces to fill up the gap. There is always an empty berth in the forecastle, and one more wanting when the small night-watch is mustered. There is one less to take the wheel,

one less to lay out with you upon the yard. You miss his form and the sound of his voice—for habit had made them almost necessary to you, and each of your senses feels the loss."

"So we shall never see him again—never!" said Ethel, with her eyes full of tears; "so kind, good, and gentle."

"And so handsome, too!" added Rose.

"A better seaman never trod a deck," sighed Mr. Quail.

"Damnation!" was the singular addendum of Captain Phillips, through his clenched teeth, when thinking of the secret he had not revealed, and the crime which, as yet, he dared not attempt to punish.

So Ethel put past "I Promessi Sposi," which had Manfredi's name written on the fly-leaf of the first volume, as the relic of a friend with whom she had spent many happy hours, whom she never more could see, and on whose vast tomb, the boundless ocean, she almost shuddered to look—for was not Morley Ashton sleeping there too?

So the gloomy day passed slowly on, and night came on.

Retired to their little cabin, Ethel and Rose were disrobing for rest—Nance Folgate had long since gone to sleep—and now, relinquishing the sad subject of Manfredi, Rose, with a blush on her charming face, was detailing to Ethel, for the second time,



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her interview with Leslie Heriot, whose ring—containing a large Scottish pearl, set with diamonds—glittered on the engaged finger of her left hand.

"And you are sure that you love him, Rose?" said Ethel, as she took her sister's face caressingly and affectionately between her soft hands.

"Dearly, devotedly," was the energetic reply. "How could I do otherwise, when he is such a kind, darling fellow—and so handsome too?"

"Have you weighed well the probabilities of the future?"

"What do you mean, Ethel dear?"

"What papa may think."

"Oh, Leslie will speak to papa to-morrow, or on the next day, at the latest."

Ethel smiled sadly at her sister's confidence.

"Our voyage will soon be over, dear Rose," said she, shaking her head seriously. "Once round the Cape of Good Hope, we shall be speedily at the Isle of France, and then your dream of joy will have an end—a rough awaking; not so sad or rough as mine, but a gloomy reality, and a doubtful future, nevertheless."

Poor Rose's usually merry eyes now filled with large tears, and she permitted the braids of her fine dark hair, which her slender fingers were wreathing up for the night, to roll down in unheeded masses over her bare bosom and back, which

shone white as the new-fallen snowdrift, in the light of the cabin lamp that swung above her.

"And Jack Page—poor Jack Page!" said Ethel, smiling, to arouse Rose's spirit; "is he quite forgotten—eh?"

"Oh bother Jack Page!" replied Rose, crimsoning, and with the faintest tinge of irritation in her tone, as she proceeded vigorously to knot up the masses of black hair. "He was a pleasant enough fellow to flirt with, or play croquet with at Laurel Lodge (dear old Laurel Lodge! ah, heavens! Ethel, shall we ever see it again?) He was a good fellow for fishing or sailing on the mere——"

"And to botanise with, and to gather wild flowers on Cherrywood Hill," added Ethel, a little maliciously.

"Yes; but he gave himself such insufferable airs after he became a rifle volunteer; and as for loving him, I should almost as soon think of loving your adorer, the gallant Captain Hawkshaw. By-the-by, how taciturn he has become of late."

"Perhaps he finds his task a hopeless one," said Ethel, with a haughty smile.

"He seems quite changed somehow," said Rose, slipping into bed, "does he not, Ethel dear? Why don't you speak to me?" added Rose, with sudden alarm, and springing from her berth, on perceiving her sister standing pale and motionless, her lips

parted, her dark eyes dilated with terror, and their gaze fixed on the little circular window of their cabin, which was simply a pane of thick glass, about nine inches in diameter, framed in an iron ring, and secured by a powerful bolt.

Rose gazed in the same direction, and beheld, to her intense dismay, the whole aperture filled by a human face—a man's apparently—pale, livid, green, and distorted, as viewed through the coarse crystal, with large keen eyes, that glared in upon them.

Whoever the person was that dared thus to violate their privacy, he occupied a position of extreme peril, for the little window in question was below the plank sheer of the ship, and considerably abaft the mizzen chains, so that the eavesdropper must have been swinging alongside, almost with his heels in the foam that boiled under the ship's counter.

Could the sea give up its dead?

Was it a spectre—Manfredi, or Morley Ashton?

Such were Rose's first ideas, as she clung in terror to her rigid but more resolute sister, who sprang forward and vainly attempted with her delicate hands to wrench round the bolt, and open the little window; but at that moment a fierce and sardonic smile seemed to spread over that livid and distorted visage, which instantly vanished, and then

nothing was seen through the aperture but the vast sea that rolled in the starlight far away.

"Papa—Nurse Folgate!" screamed Rose; but the old woman slept like one of the seven sleepers.

"Hush!" said Ethel, "'twas only some insolent seaman; but we must prevent a recurrence of this," she added, as she rapidly hung a species of curtain over the window. "Good heavens, Rose! to think how often this may have happened before, and we in total ignorance of it; but the captain shall be told in the morning."

"Oh, Ethel!" exclaimed Rose, "how terrified I am."

"Why?"

"At first I thought it was his ghost."

"Whose?"

"Poor Mr. Manfredi's."

"Nonsense, child!"

"A ghost on board of a ship, how dreadful that would be! Almost as bad as a fire, for there would be no escaping from it."

Inspired by natural emotions of doubt, Ethel opened the door and peeped out into the great cabin. All was still and quiet there, at least nothing was heard but the jarring of the rudder in its case, and of the brass swings of the lamp and tell-tale compass, with the heavy creaking of the ship's timbers, the backwash under the counter, and one

other sound, to which she had become pretty familiar about this time—to wit, the profound snoring of Mr. Quail, as he lay at full length on the cabin locker, with his peacoat spread over him, and his sou'-wester at hand, ready to relieve the deck when the middle-watch was called.

She secured the door, perhaps more carefully than usual. She knelt down by Rose's side to say her prayers, after which they retired together, but lay long awake, conversing of that future, the events of which, happily, they could so little foresee, until they dropped asleep, Rose with her charming face half pillowed on Ethel's snowy shoulder.

All remained still in the ship; but while the two sisters slept with arms entwined, each "hushed like the callow cygnet in its nest," anxious hearts were watching over them elsewhere; and they formed the subject of a somewhat unusual, but animated, discussion among the seamen — a discussion of which, as yet, they were happily ignorant.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WHAT THE DOCTOR OVERHEARD IN THE FORECASTLE BUNKS.

The love he bore Rose, the love that she permitted him to bear, and which she so fully reciprocated, together with the regard and esteem he had for the grave, gentle Ethel, and good, easy Mr. Basset, increased the anxiety with which the young Scotch surgeon beheld the growing discontent of the crew.

On deck, he more than once had heard them conferring in most unpleasant terms about the disappearance of the third mate, and, in reply to some remark of Sharkey's, Zuares Barradas said, with a cunning twinkle in his eyes:

"*Bueno! paso a paso va lejos.*"

"Wot the devil does that mean, shipmate? Avast with your Spanish. Carn't you speak the queen's English?"

"Well, it means that 'step by step goes far.' Manfredi is gone; a little spell and we shall have it all our own way," replied the Spanish American, as he hitched up his trousers and slunk forward.

"These rascals are decidedly up to something—or whence all this skulking about, this whispering in gangs, and knife-sharpening," said Heriot to the captain.

"The grindstone has never been idle all day," observed Mr. Quail, who was looking, as the captain remarked, "rather white about the gills, in consequence."

After a long conference in the cabin, Dr. Heriot offered, there being no moon about the middle of the first night-watch, to creep forward to the forecastle bunk, where, in defiance of orders, the crew now kept a light burning after sundown, and endeavour to overhear their conversation. The duty of acting eavesdropper was not a pleasant, but, in this instance, a most necessary one.

The first night Heriot attempted this, he failed to get forward unseen; but on the second, as the atmosphere, though very cloudy, was fine, and the ship under easy sail was going large, that is, with the wind abaft the beam, which careened her slightly to port, Heriot, armed with a sharp bowie-knife, concealed in his breast, so as to be ready for any emergency (for if discovered by the watch he might be sent overboard after poor Manfredi) crept forward on the leeside, keeping his head close under the bulwarks, and in the shadow.

The men of the watch were all grouped to wind-

ward, smoking with their backs against the long-boat, and the steersman could see little else than the lights that glared in the binnacles, and the ship's canvas, that towered aloft between him and the sky.

Through the two yolks of dense, thick glass that admitted light to the forecastle bunks, in which the seamen had their chests and berths, he could see nothing, save that they had, as usual with them, in defiance of the captain's order, a lamp or lantern, the light of which glared as from two bull's-eyes upon the forehatchway, the foot of the foremast, the gallows-bitts abaft it, the scuttle-butt, and so forth.

These two lines of light had the effect of rendering the rest of the deck dark, thus favouring the purpose of Heriot, who reached unseen the forecastle, and crept along it, until he found himself close to the coaming of the scuttle, or small square hatchway, which gave access thereto, and from whence there ascended into the pure saline atmosphere of the midnight sea a combination of odours that were neither of Araby nor of Ind; for more than a dozen of dirty, tarry, unwashed, and uncombed specimens of those seamen usually denominated "coloured," the most ruffianly of their class, such as may be seen lounging and loafing about the quays and grog-shops of Liverpool and Birkenhead, were all seated closely round a chest, which was

lashed by ringbolts to the deck, and formed the table, whereon they had recently supped on scalding-hot "scouse" from a greasy wooden kid; and the fumes of this savoury mess yet mingled with the tar with which their clothes were saturated, and the coarse tobacco in which they were all indulging freely, by means of pipes, quids, and cigarettes.

A ship's lantern, in which a candle sputtered, shed a wavering light through the perforated tin upon the black hair, massive frontal bones, and square jaw of Pedro Barradas, and on his coarse, leather-like ears, in which a pair of silver rings were glittering; on the dark olive face of his brother, Zuares, a villain of a more pleasing type, only because he was younger and handsomer; on the cruel, sardonic visage, the keen eyes, hooked nose, and enormous chin, and tangled elf-locks of Bill Badger, the long-legged and ungainly Yankee; on the huge head and giant hands of the odious Sharkey, who sat with his cheeks wedged between his hands, his elbows planted on the chest, and his eyes that, from under the bloody bandage encircling his temples, glared at each speaker alternately; and on all the rest of the ill-selected crew—fell the lantern's dim uncertain ray, bringing some forward into light, and leaving others almost in shadow.

Though quite sober, for as yet they had no means for procuring alcohol, they generally all spoke at

once, and were engaged in an angry dispute, which, however, they were still cautious enough to conduct with suppressed voices.

Pedro Barradas grasped in his left hand an old dice-box, which was served round with spunyarn, and two suspicious-looking dice were rattled in it from time to time.

At the moment that Heriot peeped in, it would seem as if our Spanish acquaintance suddenly lost his temper. His black eyes filled with fire, his swarthy cheek grew livid and pale, he showed all his sharp white teeth like a dog about to bite, and striking his drawn knife into the lid of the chest, round which they were all grouped, and with a force of action that made them all shrink back, he uttered a tremendous oath, and said, in a low, hoarse voice:

"It is agreed, then, that we take the ship, and make all the people aft walk the plank. Am I to understand this?"

"Yes, yes," from all hands was the reply; "and all must walk the plank to leeward."

"Except the women," suggested the Canadian seaman, named Bolter.

"In course we shall keep them!" said Badger, laying a long and dirty finger on one side of his hawk nose, and closing an eye wickedly; "and take very partik'lar care o' the darlings, too."

"We take the ship," resumed Pedro Barradas, speaking good English, and with an air of authority; "and then we shall run her on her own account."

"How?" asked one.

"In the slaving or piccarooning line, or anything else that comes to hand."

"But where to?" asked the Canadian, who seemed a man of doubts.

"Anywheres, darn your nutmeg of a head!" growled the Yankee; "anywheres, arter we has had a jolly spree ashore."

"On what shore, mate?"

"On the coast ov Africy, in course; but not afore, mate—not afore, I calc'late."

"Come, now, I likes this," observed Sharkey, putting in his voice; "if water and wittles runs short, we may overhaul an Ingeeman, homeward-bound, or an Australian liner——"

"With sojers aboard, mayhap," said Bolter; "so what will you dew then?"

"Hail or signal for a boat, to be sure, and sink it to leeward with a cold shot through its ribs. Shout that it has been swamped under the counter, and to send another, and another, and so knock 'em all on the head. Then run her aboard, take all out of her—the women, too, if any—then scuttle or burn her."

"A game you won't play long athout being overhauled by some cussed man-o'-war," said the Canadian. "I tell you, mates, the good old piratical times have been put out o' fashion long since. Even the slaving business is knocked up by them blazing smoke-jacks and gun-boats of the African squadron. The sea ain't wot it was, mates, when old Kidd sailed the *Vulture* down the Channel with a skull and marrow-bones flying at his foremast-head."

"Hooray! I'll ship with you, Barradas," cried another. "Grog for the drinking, a grab at these gals, and the pick o' the good things in the passengers' trunks and cabin-lockers."

"And till that time comes," added Sharkey, "we'll work Tom Cox's traverse with old Phillips—that we shall. Precious little work he'll get out of me."

"But I don't like usin' the knife or plank if they could be done athout, mates," said the Canadian ponderingly.

"The Reverend Mr. Ben Bolter, a Methody parson, 'll offer up a blessin' over the empty mess-kids," sneered the Yankee.

"*Par todos santos*," growled Pedro Barradas, giving the Canadian a glance of profound scorn, while Zuares uttered a shrill and ferocious laugh.

"I say, cooky," said Sharkey, in a way which he

supposed to be very jocular, "as Ben Bolter don't like the stickin' business, couldn't you put summut tasty into the mess-kid o' the cabbin passingers, and pison the whole bilin' o' them? I have known o' such things being done afore now, mates, and many other things, too, that never appeared in the ship's log. Have you any Calabar beans aboard?"

"Yaas," replied the cook, with a regular negro grin, for he was a black Virginian, named Quaco; "dere's a bagful in de hold. Why?"

"I have known of a handful, put in a copper of peasoup, doing for a whole ship's crew afore now."

"When?"

"In the Gulf of Florida once, and again among the Coral Islands, in the Pacific. Aye, aye, mates, I have seen some rum sprees in *my* time."

"And you are likely to see more," added the Yankee, "ere this cussed old craft gets her anchors over the bows, and her ground-tackle rove. Ha, ha! But as for the pison, you darned fool, wot of old Basset's gals? We wants 'em partik'lar, you know. So avast with your Calabar beans. I guess, mate, you're up a tree, raythe r."

Sharkey was abashed into silence.

"And that Scotch doctor," said a gaunt, unhealthy-looking seaman, named Cribbit, who had not yet spoken, and who so frequently required Heriot's medical aid that he had imbibed half the

contents of his medicine-chest, "must he, too, walk the plank?"

"In course he must," drawled Bill Badger, stuffing an enormous quid in the inmost recesses of his capacious mouth.

"No, no, *demonio*, no!" said the elder Barradas; "we must keep him alive so long as we want him. We can't physic ourselves, *companeros*, especially if fever comes aboard, which it is likely to do if we hug the land."

"But in physicking us he might poison the whole blessed gang," suggested the Canadian.

"No fear of that. We'll have him chained to the mainmast, and if a man dies in his hands, then *el senor doctor de medicena* shall be tipped overboard after the others."

"Thank you, my Spanish *patrone*," thought Heriot, who had listened to all this with blood that alternately boiled and curdled; "a pleasant little medical practice you are likely to find me here!"

"Mayhap that fellow, Hawkshaw, would join us?" suggested the Canadian again.

"He, the white-livered Perro!" exclaimed Pedro, "I long to have my Albacete knife between his ribs. I'll teach him to play off quarter-deck airs with me, the God-abandoned Piccaro! Well, is it agreed that, instead of letting old Phillips haul up for Table Bay, we keep the ship off the land whether

he will or will not take her before we are abreast of La Tierra de Natal; hug the coast of Africa after; have a run through the Mozambique Channel, and then stand right across the Indian Sea for whatever we may overhaul?"

A unanimous clapping of very hard and very dirty hands responded heartily to this programme.

"Now, Pedro, the *dados* (dice)," said Zuares, impatiently.

"Yes, mates, the dice!" added the Yankee, setting his chin, which was like a shoemaker's knife, upon his knees, and clasping his hands over his ankles, so that he squatted on his hams like a huge baboon. "Hooray! the old *Herminey* has been trimmed by the starn since she saw Dungeness Light; but we'll trim her by the head arter we doubles the Cape—eh, mates? So now to draw lots for them two pretty creeturs, as I calc'late is just agoin' to bed about this blessed time. Think o' that, mates! I'm a thorough-bred Yankee—half bull, half shark, with an uncommon cross of the snake; so I'm blowed if I can wait a'most till we leave Table Bay astarn and bear up towards Natal. But rattle away, Pedro, my boy!—Captain Pedro that is to be, I reckon."

The blood of the young Scotchman grew cold as he listened, longing for a brace of loaded revolvers, that he might shoot down the whole band; but

the talkative Yankee began his nasal drawling again.

"How I'd like to have one of 'em under a big palm-tree in some snug diggin' on the Africy coast, or in a wigwam on the Mozambique, thatched with leaves, no topsails to reef o' nights, and nothin' to do all day, but keep on admiring her, and swigging the grog old Phillips has aboard, or blowing a whiff of 'baccy—eh, mates? Jeerusalem! that's summut like life, I calc'late!"

"*Morte de Dios!*" swore Pedro Barradas, with a very dark look; "haul in your slack, and be hanged to you! There are other things than the two girls worth casting lots for!"

"Is there really, now?" drawled Badger.

"I was looking into the senoras' cabin the other night, and saw them going to bed. I saw lovely necks and shoulders, and all that; but I saw more, I can tell you, *companeros*."

"Smite my timbers!" "Shiver my tawpsails!" "Darn my eyes!" "Oh, Jeerusalem!" And "What did you see?" asked several all at once.

"A splendid jewel-case," replied the Spaniard, while an avaricious gleam sparkled in his dark eyes; "a box with diamond rings for the ears and fingers; carbuncles, turquoises, and topazes, in bracelets and necklets, all glittering on the trays

of blue and crimson velvet. So he who loses the girls should have a chance——"

"Of grabbing the jewels," interrupted Badger; "in course he should—in course!"

"Jewels or not," said Zuares Barradas, laughing, while he rolled up a fresh cigarito, "I'll teach one senora, at least, that it is no longer here *mira y no totas*, as they say in Minorca."

"Which means, in your cussed lingo?" asked Bolter.

"*Look* at me, but *touch* me not!" replied the young Spaniard, with a grin.

"I'm rayther pertik'lar," observed Mr. Badger, "and I might do neither one nor t'other, if I wor in Minorky."

"Ay, mate; but if you saw the Minorca girls in their robazillas of white lace or silk, pinned under their pretty dimpled chins, and falling over their shoulders, to be lifted at times by the wind, only as if to show the low bodice and rounded bosom beneath—*hombre*."

"Here is a sentimental young villain, with an eye for the picturesque!" thought Heriot.

"Now, then, the *dados*," said Pedro, rattling the dice-box. "I throw myself first."

"*Maladetto*, Pedro!" interrupted Zuares. "Content yourself with rum and plunder; you are too old and crank for either of these girls to be pleased with you."

"*Vaya usted al Satanos!*" responded his affectionate elder brother. "The girls, at all events, are not too young for me to be pleased with them. I am not more than forty, you son of a burnt *castano*."

"Take the old nurse, Pedro—you'll have her a free gift, gratis, all for nothin', and Badger's blessing into the bargain. If one o' these gals falls to me," continued the talkative Yankee, "I reckon I must get shaved by the doctor, and be fixed anew; have my 'air swabbed down with some o' the cook's slush, and a hextra pull up o' my shirt collar—eh, mates?"

Amid the ferocious laughter which these and similar remarks drew forth, and while the dice-box rattled on the sea-chest lid Dr. Heriot withdrew, and crept aft, just as he had done forward, by keeping close under the lee bulwarks.

Reaching the companion-way unseen, he slipped downstairs, with a burning brain and aching heart —a heart sick and sore with apprehension for others rather than for himself; and now, with his ear tingling with countless coarse oaths, obscenities, and foul jokes, which, of course, have been omitted in our relation of the remarkable discussion he had overheard, he sought at once the cabin of Captain Phillips, to communicate the dreadful game that was on the *tapis* in the forecastle of the ill-fated *Hermione*.

## CHAPTER VII.

### MEASURES FOR DEFENCE CONCERTED.

Though Ethel and Rose had retired to rest, the hour was not late, and Captain Phillips, Mr. Basset, and Hawkshaw were still lingering over a glass of wine in the cabin, when Dr. Heriot entered it.

The pallor of his face, and the excited expression of his eyes, made them start with exclamations of surprise and inquiry; and their alarm increased when he filled up a glass with port and drained it, the crystal rattling against his teeth while he did so.

"Hallo, doctor, what the deuce is the matter?" asked bluff Captain Phillips, changing colour, or rather losing it partially. "You have been forward —eh?"

"Yes, sir; and have there heard more than enough to confirm our worst fears."

Phillips arose, and closed the cabin door. He then summoned from his berth Mr. Quail (as Mr. Foster, the second mate, had charge of the deck), and they, together with Mr. Basset and Hawkshaw, heard with undisguised consternation the result of the doctor's eavesdropping.

As for Hawkshaw, he had long endured the horrible conviction of guilt, with the still more gnawing sense or dread of perpetual suspicion in others. He loved Ethel, yet, as we have said elsewhere, at times he almost hated her for her coldness to him; but now his soul was full of terror—terror for her and for himself, as he knew he would meet with little mercy from the Barradas and their friends. Retribution for the crime he had committed at Acton Chine was about to come at last, and he had fallen into a trap of his own devising!

Neither Captain Phillips nor Mr. Quail were much astonished, though grieved and alarmed, by Dr. Heriot's tidings; but poor Mr. Basset's first thought was for his daughters—his young, delicate, and tenderly-nurtured girls; and already, in his excited imagination, he beheld them, after his own butchery, in the rude grasp of those lawless wretches, and subjected to the grossest indignities, far from help or human aid, upon the lonely sea, and in a floating hell—indignities the mere idea of which wrung the poor man's heart with agony.

To-morrow, to-night, even now, they might be advancing towards the cabin, intent on assassination and robbery!

The dread was maddening to the unhappy parent, who made a step towards his daughters' sleeping place, as if in anticipation, by thought and deed, to

save them from the coming peril. He had no voice or coherence of thought for a time, and listened like one in a dream to the discussion or consultation now held by the officers of the ship.

After relinquishing his practice as a barrister in London, Scriven Basset had spent many years of ease and affluence at Laurel Lodge, and all unused to alarms or excitements, he felt himself totally destitute of the stamina or courage requisite for facing so sudden and perilous an emergency. Personal danger he might have confronted, for he had all the spirit of a gentleman; but at the thought of his daughters—the graceful and ladylike Ethel, the sweet and playful Rose—his soul seemed to die within him.

Cramply Hawkshaw's visage was paler than usual. He remembered the threats used towards himself, when Pedro Barradas so summarily appropriated his gold watch, and while trembling for Ethel, he began to think of means for quitting the ship, for the safety of his own person, of which—being all the property he possessed—he was rather disposed to be economical.

"The accursed—the bloody-minded villains!" exclaimed Captain Phillips, after a pause, while pacing to and fro. "This comes of having a coloured crew; and this is why they have been so sullen and insolent of late."

"And so lazy at work, too," groaned Mr. Quail.

"Lazy! they have done little else but take three turns a day round the long-boat, and then a pull at the scuttle-butt."

"For weeks there has been no work done," resumed Mr. Quail; "all our spunyarn and chafing-gear are worn out, and you might as well expect them to polish the chain-cable, or brighten up the best bower, as prepare for an emergency, or get the fellows even to wash or mend their own clothes."

"If a man-of-war hove in sight, I'd put an end to their sogering!" said Captain Phillips, still pacing about. "I'd make them toe the mark, and work the old iron out of them. I'd have them all seized up, and made spread-eagles of at the gangway, the coloured vermin."

"A worse lot were never shipped, unless on board a Spanish pirate," said Mr. Quail, with another groan, as he thought of plump, jolly Mrs. Quail, and their five little Quails, at that moment, doubtless all a-bed in their pretty little rose-covered cottage near the Windmill-hill at Gravesend.

"Is there not one on whom we could depend?" asked Mr. Basset, in faltering accents.

"Not one, sir," replied Captain Phillips; "not one, except Boy Joe, the steward, and he is not worth much."

"We are in a desperate situation, certainly," said

Heriot. "But I am most concerned for you and—and your daughters, Mr. Basset."

Tears started to the lawyer's eyes, and he wrung the young doctor's readily-proffered hand.

"And I, too, Mr. Basset, feel for you and your two dear girls—though perhaps this business may be all talk and sogering; yet I confess it don't look like it," said the captain. "Thank Heaven I am a bachelor, and have no one depending upon me but the son of my poor brother Bill, that was drowned in the Straits of Sunda, and my life is insured on his account, so that is all right; but these young ladies——"

Phillips paused, for Mr. Basset, who was reclining on the cabin locker, covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud.

"We have no time to lose in preparing to meet these rascals," said Dr. Heriot, with growing confidence. "We must see what arms we can muster, and endeavour to use them too. D—n it, Captain Phillips, we must show fight in some fashion, and not all walk the plank without making some of them walk it also. I have a pair of good rifled pistols."

"And I have two six-barrelled revolvers and a fowling-piece," added the captain.

"Sixteen shots," said Hawkshaw, brightening a little. "We can barricade the cabin, and defend it with these against them."

"We are seven, including myself," said Phillips.

"Seven?" said Mr. Basset, looking up.

"Yes, sir; there are the two mates, the doctor, yourself, and I, Captain Hawkshaw, and Joe the steward."

"But they are eighteen in number, and armed too."

"Only with sheath-knives, so far as we know; but then there are hatchets, cleavers, handspikes, and capstan-bars, with anything else that will form a weapon."

"Oh that we were nearer the coast of Africa, that we might all get into a boat, and quietly leave the ship on a dark night!" said Mr. Basset, wringing his hands, while Dr. Heriot unlocked a case of pistols—the parting gift of his class-fellows on his leaving the old College of King James VI.—and proceeded at once to load and cap them, after which he put all the ammunition in his pockets.

"Fear for your girls bewilders you, sir," said Captain Phillips, in a low voice, to Mr. Basset. "That, perhaps, is natural; but to be landed on the coast of Africa might not mend matters much with you and them, if you fell in with some houseless Dutch bushmen or wild Cape Caffres; and as for me, I shall never quit my ship while a plank of her holds together."

"Captain Phillips," said young Heriot, with his

teeth clenched, and his eyes flashing, as he thought of sweet Rose Basset, whose last kiss seemed yet to linger on his lip, "if they keep quiet until morning, I have a mind to call forward Pedro Barradas in front of the crew, tell him what I have overheard, and then, as an example, shoot him dead before the rest!"

The captain vehemently opposed this idea as rash, and added:

"You are very risky for a Scotsman; you would only perish under the knives and handspikes of the rest, and thus bring destruction the sooner on us all."

"Oh, if a man-o'-war would but come in sight!" groaned Mr. Basset.

"They are seldom so far off the Cape; and we are a good way to the southward of it already."

"Could we not sound the crew? All may not be so bad as the Barradas," said Hawkshaw.

"They are all alike, confound 'em!" rejoined Captain Phillips, as he brought from his cabin the two revolvers and the fowling-piece, all of which he proceeded quietly, but quickly, to load and cap.

The arms and ammunition were distributed among them, and Hawkshaw really handled the "six-shooter" like a man who was used to it, and, doubtless, when in Mexico, his life and his food had frequently depended on the goodness of his aim.

"If we only take care and fire steadily, we may

dispose of them all in case of an attack," said Dr. Heriot, who, with the captain, was the most resolute of the little band. "Our chief aim must be to prevent a surprise."

After a council of war, it was arranged that the ladies should be warned against leaving the cabin or venturing much on deck, and that they should be kept in ignorance of the why and wherefore.

That the seven men in the cabin should stand staunchly by each other, and never undress when lying in their berths, so as to be ready for instant service.

That one at a time should hold a strict watch on the companion-way and cabin door, and that all should keep their arms loaded and their ammunition constantly about them.

That as little canvas as possible should be kept on the ship, so that aloft she might be ready for any sudden emergency, squall, or catastrophe.

A large trunk, full of Mr. Basset's law-books (which next morning was to have been shot into the hold as lumber), was placed near the outer cabin door, and lashed by one of its handles to a brass ring-bolt, and so arranged that, sluing round the other end, it effectually barricaded the sliding-door that opened to the steerage and companion-ladder.

To defend this avenue in case of an attack, and so sell their lives as dearly as possible, or, it might

be, to shoot all their assailants down in succession, were the simple but stern resolutions come to.

These preliminaries adjusted, the captain, armed with his revolver, took the first two hours' spell. The rest retired to their various berths, and lay down with their clothes on, and their weapons beside them.

The two hours passed away in silence.

The captain went on deck, and sent the second mate, Foster, below, in a not very enviable frame of mind, after hearing what was on the *tapis*, for, like Mr. Quail—

> "He, poor fellow! had a wife and children—
> Two things for dying people quite bewildering."

So, with a beating and anxious heart, he lay down on a locker, with a sharp hatchet under him—the only weapon that came to hand.

The ship was still going large, with the breeze abaft the beam, and the fore and main studding-sails set. Joe, the steward, was at the wheel; the light in the forecastle bunks was extinguished now, and the watch on deck were all grouped, in silence apparently, to leeward of the long-boat.

All seemed still for that night, or rather the remainder of the morning, when the captain warned the miserable Mr. Basset to take the next "spell," or watch, as sentinel at the cabin door.

Pale and sleepless, with bloodshot eyes, the poor man received the loaded revolver, with all the timidity and awkwardness of one who had never handled such a weapon before, and dreading lest it might explode of its own accord, like a loaded fire-wheel, and thus shoot himself and everybody else; but anon the thought of his daughters nerved his heart and steadied his hand.

Slowly, as if Time stood still, the minutes passed; and when, as usual, the ship's bell clanged at each half-hour on deck, it sounded in his ears and in his soul like the knell of doom!

So the poor father continued to watch in breathless anxiety; now pacing the carpeted cabin in miserable restlessness, then seating himself upon the stern locker, with the revolver on his knee, and his hands over his face, breathing an unuttered prayer for his darling daughters; now listening, keenly as a hunted hare, at the door of their little cabin, to hear their soft, low breathing. Anon, seeking the companion-way, as if the confined air of the ship stifled him, and looking up at the mizzen-rigging towering into the starry sky, where the mizzen-topsail, topgallantsail, and the driver, with the boom and gaff, spread between him and heaven like a broad gray cloud of canvas.

Then the thought of his dead wife, and their once dear happy home in England far away.

By a freak of memory, past hours of happiness, of joviality and frivolity—hours spent amid the flowery and leafy seclusion of Laurel Lodge, came crowding on him, with faces of friends, their voices, smiles, and little episodes; the green sunny lawn, the stately chase of Acton-Rennel, the Norman cross on Cherry-tree Hill, and the great yew that shaded his wife's grave in that quiet old English churchyard, where he might never lie: all these came before him now, and he marvelled in his aching breast if the horrors that overhung him now were not a nightmare, and all a dreadful dream!

Ethel and Rose, so pure, so fair, so lovely, and so highly bred, to be in such peril; at the mercy of such men as those who formed the crew of the *Hermione*, and far from all human succour on the wide, wide, open sea.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SAIL TO WINDWARD.

Under the interlaced crosses of Great Britain—our brave old union-jack—a very different crew manned that good little ship the *Princess*, of London, which we last left when dropping the giant cone of Tristan d'Acunha astern, and bearing on her voyage towards Tasmania.

Under Tom Bartelot's command, all went well and prosperously, and his ship had fine weather and spanking topsail breezes, after leaving the romantic Isle of Tristan.

Anxious to be useful and to kill time, Morley Ashton had applied himself to seamanship, and, in seeking to master all the mysteries thereof, became the peculiar pupil of old Noah Gawthrop, who confidently undertook "to make a man and a sailor of him, before they saw Wan Demon's Land."

He could soon dip his hands in a bucket of tar without wincing; slush the mast, from the royal-masthead down, without becoming squeamish; he could box the compass, take his trick at the helm,

and achieve many clever things, from holding the log-reel upwards to sending down a royal-yard without mistake or blunder, which Noah told him "was one of the prime feats of seamanship, which even the queen on the throne couldn't do."

The first time he accomplished this, was when a squall was coming on. Ben Plank had the fore-royal, Noah the main-royal, and Morley the mizzen.

His spar was certainly the lightest, with a smaller sail, but he had it struck and sent down before the others, greatly to the delight of old Noah, who, with all his ugliness, which was undeniable, was a genuine salt of the old school—a regular British tar, with his slouching shoulders and light gait, swinging arms, and half-closed hands, that were always ready to "tally on" to anything; a comical twinkle in his eye, and who believed in whistling for wind as truly as the Turkish skipper who pours oil upon the sea, in the hope that it may float to Mecca, for the same useful purpose.

Noah bore on his breast, engraved in gunpowder, a little romance of his younger days—a sailor and a girl standing on the sea-shore. In the background (or offing, to speak more correctly) lay a ship, with her topsails loose, hove-apeak to her anchor, while the smoke from a gun—the signal for sea—curled over her quarter. Under the male figure were the initials "N. G.," and under the girl's were—what

we won't say, for in them lay the pet secret of old Noah's honest heart. The ship, however, he often pointed to with pride, saying it was a "lovely pictur' of her Majesty's ship the *Haurora*, of fifty guns, as was—an ugly smoke-jack now, with a screw-propeller in her starn."

The weather was cool, almost cold, at times, and frequently icebergs were in sight, with their white glistening pinnacles standing sharply defined against the sky, and shaded off with pale green or purple tints, that blended with the deep blue of the sea.

Tom Bartelot's cheerful temperament, his songs and his *bonhomie*, and Morrison's queer legends of Scotland and the sea, together with grave and earnest advice, and confidence in a Providence who ordered all things for the best, had a good effect upon Morley Ashton's spirits, which might have sunk, circumstanced as he was, amid the monotony of a sea voyage, with foreshadowed fears of evil tidings on reaching the Isle of France, after making a tour so circuitous as Tasmania.

Ignorant of the unlooked-for detention of the *Hermione* at the Canaries, and of the series of foul winds she had encountered, Morley never doubted that now the Bassets must have reached their destination, and been installed in their new home; that Mr. Basset must have entered on his official duties, and if they were accompanied by one so

enterprising as Cramply Hawkshaw, it was difficult to foretell how Cupid and Fortune—blind deities both—might reward his perseverance, and thus cast a fatal blight upon the hopes of our hero who, like a poor "pilgrim of the heart," or a knight-errant of old, was traversing the sea from shore to shore in search of a lost love.

One day, as Morley trod the deck to and fro listlessly, he was startled by the unusual, or, at least, unexpected cry of—

"Land, ho!"

Telescope in hand, he sprang up the weather-rigging.

"Land it is, indeed," said Tom Bartelot, shading his eyes with his hand, and peering over the weather-quarter.

"What land, Tom?"

"Diego Alvarez, or Gough's Island. I have been looking out for it all forenoon. Keep her full and by—full and by, lad," he added to the steersman; "keep her closer to the wind—see how that foretopsail shivers."

This was about six bells (*i.e.*, 3 P.M.) on a fine, clear afternoon. The hill of Gough's Island arose dim and blue upon their weather-bow.

Discovered long, long ago, by an adventurous Portuguese mariner, who bestowed upon it its name, it is a lonely and desolate place, covered with moss

and sea-grass, the abode only of sea-elephants and the fur-seal. It was named anew by Captain Gough, of the *Richmond*, when on his voyage to China in 1731.

After leaving it astern, good fortune seemed to abandon the *Princess* and her crew.

A series of foul winds that veered round every point of the compass, with heavy gusts and squally weather, beset her, and so cloudy was the sky, that for several days Bartelot and his mate were quite unable to make an observation—*i.e.*, to take the sun's altitude at noon.

In one squall the mizzen-topmast was carried away, being broken right off at the cap, the heel with the fid alone remaining in the top.

"So, friend Morley," said Tom, "if this kind of work and these foul winds continue, we may see the Table Mountain, and have to run into the bay for fresh water."

"At the Cape of Good Hope?"

"Yes. Then if you wish to have a day's run in Lubberland, you may come ashore with me; and who can say," he added, kindly, on perceiving how Ashton's countenance fell at the prospect of fresh delays, "but we may there find a craft bound for the island of Paul and Virginia, and get your hammock swung aboard of her at once?"

One day the weather cleared a little, and the sun broke forth a few minutes before noon.

Bartelot and Morrison betook them to quadrant, sextant, and chart, and found they were within some 300 miles of the Cape of Storms.

After this the sky resumed its sombre and inky hue; the sea was gray, save where the sun shot his beams like a flood of yellow light through a rent in the clouds, and lit the waves below with a golden sheen, long and steadily, about fifteen miles distant on their weather-bow.

"Sail, ho!" shouted Ben Plank, who, with some others, was up aloft taking advantage of this bright blink, to get the spare mizzen-topmast shipped, with all its hamper and gearing.

"Where away, Ben?" asked Morley, snatching Tom's telescope from its brass hooks under the companion-hatch.

"There, sir, in that streak of light to windward."

Looming large as coming out of the haze, Morley saw a large, square-rigged vessel, with all her fore-and-aft canvas set, running close-hauled on a different current of wind, which did not as yet affect the *Princess*, and which would probably carry her ahead.

Her canvas was white as snow, and shone like the outspread wings of a swan in the bright gleam of sunshine, and in strong relief against the gray and dusky sky beyond.

She was visible but for a few minutes—so briefly,

indeed, that Morrison had not time to run the ensign up to the gaff-peak, when she seemed to dart into the gray obscurity ahead, and to vanish like a phantom that melted into the sky; but though invisible, it was evident that the *Princess*, a faster sailer, would soon leave her far astern.

In that large square-rigged ship, that spanked along on a taut bowline, with the white foam curling under her black bows, and flying over her gilded catheads, how little Morley Ashton imagined that Ethel Basset—the Ethel of his hopes by day and dreams by night, the centre around which all his aspirations and his life itself revolved—was seated side by side with Hawkshaw on one of the quarter-deck seats, watching, through a fifteen-mile lorgnette, or racing-glass, the outline of the *Princess*, whose canvas being all in shadow came blackly out, for a few minutes, from the sombre atmosphere to leeward, and then melted from their view for ever.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE STORM.

VARIED by occasional torrents of rain, black, cloudy, and squally skies, the regular "Cape weather" continued after this, and the *Princess* was soon running under close-reefed topsails. So frequently were the reefs taken in and shaken out, that Bill Morrison said they reminded him of an old Scottish seaman's rhyme:

> "Gif the rain pouirs ere the wind swurl,
> Your topsails lowse and gar them furl;
> But gif the wind blaws ere pouirs the rain,
> Your topsails lowse, and hoist again."

Even the gay spirit of Tom Bartelot became depressed by the gloomy and threatening state of the weather, and he spent nearly his whole time on deck, or in observing the compasses, the barometer, and state of the pumps.

Two days after the strange sail had been seen on the weather-bow, the glass was still falling, while the sea and wind were rising.

At seven bells, after taking a hurried breakfast

Tom found the wind increasing to a gale, so he took in the maintopgallantsail, the second reef of his topsails, and set the mainstaysail.

By midday he had to summon all hands on deck.

"Close-reef the topsails, furl mainsail and fore and mizzen-topsail."

These orders followed each other rapidly.

Soon after, the *Princess* was flying through the gloomy sea under a close-reefed maintopsail and reefed foresail, shipping a great deal of water the while, and labouring hard, as her pumps worked ill.

After this, the wind began to die away, the sea went somewhat down, and then more canvas was spread on the ship; but there were many indications in the sky and atmosphere which filled Tom and Morrison, and Gawthrop, too, for he had his nameless nautical instincts, with anxieties which the younger men of the crew could not fail to perceive.

"How's the barometer, Morrison?" was the frequent question.

"Still falling slowly, sir."

"What do you think the night will be?" asked Morley.

"There's a gloom, and a closeness too, indicating thunder."

"Aye," said Noah Gawthrop, who had the wheel, "the wind and the sea will make a fine

bobbery together in these parts afore the morning watch is called."

"Steward—Ben Plank, get the dead lights shipped," cried Bartelot, "here comes the squall again! In with all the light sails, Morrison; hurry forward—'way aloft lads, and lay out on the yards!"

Thus, by six o'clock, she was again running under close-reefed topsails and foresail.

The clouds were banking up in strange, wild, and fantastic forms to windward; black and sombre, they were altering every moment, revealing weird-like patches of white and livid sky beyond. At some parts of the horizon the blended sea and sky had the darkness of night, while in the zenith there was at times the brightness almost of noon.

"I don't like the aspect of all this, Morley," said Bartelot, in a low voice to his friend; "we are in for a rough, wild night, and I wish it were well past."

The wind veered rapidly round half of the compass; sometimes it seemed to blow from all quarters at once. It came in strong and hot gusts, while, through the bosom of the black clouds at the horizon, the red lightning seemed to plunge its seething bolts in the sea, and to add to the sublime terror of such a scene; the atmosphere was so sulphurous that, at times, luminous lights like fireballs

or meteors were seen on every masthead, yardarm, and beam-end.

"Furl the topsails, lower the yards upon the cap, leave nothing set but the close-reefed foresail," were now Bartelot's orders.

Morley had never before seen so wild a tempest; but he was now seaman enough to scramble aloft with the rest, and soon found himself on the foot-rope, and "laying out" on the arm of the main-yard, and, as he was first up at the weather-earring, there holding on with all his strength, for so weird was the scene below, the flapping of the canvas, the snapping of ropes, that cracked like coach-whips in the bellowing wind, the swaying of the rigging, and the pitching of the ship, that a terrible nausea came over him, together with a giddiness, and had not a seaman, named Erwin, who was by his side, caught him, he might have toppled into the sea, that roared and seethed below.

Ben Plank, being a strong fellow, had his post in the slings of the mainyard, to pack the sail, and make up the bunt, or stow the heavy middle portion. Soon all was snug aloft; but again the wind changed so rapidly, that it flew round from the south-east to the north-west, and then with a mighty sound of rending and tearing, the foresail was split to ribbons, that flapped and cracked like rifle shots in the tempest, while the ship, which

seemed almost enveloped in lightning for an instant, was almost thrown on her beam-ends.

"Stand from under, men—there go the masts!" shouted Bartelot through his trumpet, and a stunning peal of thunder bellowed over the ocean at the same moment.

Then followed a mighty crash, as if the heavens were falling on the deck, and all shrunk instinctively aside, or stooped downward, as the three topmasts and jib-boom broke off at the caps, and the *Princess* was a wreck in a moment.

"Hatchets—cut away the hamper to ease the ship!" was now the order, and, in a short time, the tangled wilderness of yards, masts, cross-trees and blocks, stays and rigging, on being cut adrift, whirled out of sight to leeward, carrying with it the unfortunate seaman Erwin, who had been caught by the body in the bight of a rope.

By the fall of the mizzen-topmast the starboard quarter-boat was dashed to pieces, and the other, which was a life-boat, was torn from its davits and vanished in the darkness like a child's toy, as a tremendous sea pooped the ship.

"Tom," gasped Morley, as he clung, half-drowned, or stunned, to a belaying-pin, "are we indeed lost—do you think all is over?"

"Nearly so—if this continues long," was the composed reply. "Hold on, lads, here comes another sea!"

Now the black waves continued to burst over the vessel with a series of thundering explosions, as if determined to overwhelm it, till all around was foam, as white as snow; but though labouring at times with her gunwale almost under water, her whole deck strewed with fragments and splinters of timber, bulwarks, buckets, pieces of rope, blocks, sails, and spars, that were washed to and fro, and while the crew, knee-deep in this *débris*, clung to shrouds and belaying-pins, she rose up buoyantly ever and anon, on the crest of a wave, with all the water streaming from her, and all the while the wild wind blew in gusts, and bellowed like an unchained fiend. Amid the terrible scene another seaman was swept overboard and drowned; the long-boat was uprooted from its lashings and chocks over the main-hatch, and carried over the side, by a sea that came right amidships, and tore away half the starboard-bulwarks, so, fearing that the ship would founder, Bartelot, with a heavy heart, gave orders to cut away the lower masts.

The men were soon at work with sharp axes, and, while keeping afoot with difficulty under the drenching seas, shipped every moment by the labouring hull, after cutting through the shrouds and stays, a few blows at the foot of each mast, readily sent them, in succession, crashing to leeward, where they vanished amid foam and obscurity.

Noah Gawthrop had just relinquished the now useless wheel, when a wave broke over the quarter, tearing the rudder from its bands, and dashing the wheel to pieces.

"All's over with the poor *Princess*, Morley," said Tom, with a groan; "she won't outlive the night, I fear."

Morrison now came aft to report that the chain-pump had given way, the other had become choked, and that water was rising fast in the well.

"She's sprung a leak, sir, somewhere about her fore-foot, so it is a bad look-out for us all," said Plank, the carpenter.

By this time the bulwarks were all torn away from the stanchions and timber-heads amidships by the sea, which now made clean breaches over the entire hull.

Nothing could be done now by the crew, but to leave the ship to her fate, and to hold on by whatever offered itself, and wait the event of the storm abating, or, what seemed much more likely, of the ship foundering, by settling bodily down into the trough of the sea, and rising never more. Her cargo, too, sugar and tobacco, were the reverse of buoyant under the circumstances; so now, Morley, Bartelot, Morrison, the chief mate, Plank, the carpenter, and old Noah, were all grouped about the quarter-deck, some holding on by the timber-heads, others by the

stump of the mizzenmast, while the rest of the crew were grouped forward, where they lashed themselves to the stump of the foremast, the barrel of the windlass, and gallows-bitts; but so dark was the night, so terrible the sea, and so loud the wind, that neither party could see or hear anything of the other.

Suddenly there was a rending crash!

An invocation of heaven rose to the lips of all, and a wild, despairing cry from those in the forecastle reached the ears of our friends on the quarter-deck. Morley felt the whole ship tremble beneath his feet, as the entire quarter was burst up, or torn away from the rest of the hull, and with his companions he found himself floating on it, as on a species of raft, and up to his neck in water every moment, while whirled away from the ship, of which they saw no more, and which, no doubt, went speedily down with all on board.

Just as this happened, Plank, the carpenter, was swept away, clutching with despair a fragment of wreck.

On this frail remnant of the shattered ship, the other four unfortunates found themselves adrift on that wild, dark midnight sea, which whirled it to and fro like a cork on the black, tempestuous waves.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FOUR CASTAWAYS.

"LORD have mercy on us!" escaped the lips of all.

It would seem that, by the strength and violence of the sea, the entire quarter-deck abaft the mizzen-mast, with a portion of its bulwarks, the taffrail, some parts of the stern windows and quarter galleries, had been torn from the ship, and this crazy fragment was all that intervened between our four friends and eternity.

Being level with the sea it could not be capsized, which, at least, was one good property.

Lashed to such parts of it as were available, the poor victims clung there in desperation and silence, waiting, and praying in their hearts that the storm would abate; and now, as if its errand had been done, its object accomplished in the total destruction of the unfortunate *Princess*, the gusty wind began to lull gradually, though the agitated sea rolled high and black as ever.

As the common saying has it, the waves "ran mountains high;" but it must be borne in mind,

that few waves rise more than ten feet above the general level of the water, which, when ten more are given for the trough of the sea, makes the whole height from base to crest twenty feet—sufficiently high to be terrible in aspect and effect.

Over the raft of the *Princess* (for it was little better) those vast hills of water made a thundering breach every instant, or came surging up through the apertures, from whence the companion and skylight had been torn away.

The taffrail was strong, and it was chiefly to it that Bartelot, Morley, Morrison, and Gawthrop lashed themselves, for gradually all that remained of the bulwarks were torn away, and the stump of the mizzenmast was soon worked or sucked out by the sea.

There was an appalling sense of loneliness, of dread and desolation, and of too probable death being near at hand, though, perhaps, all the more terrible, if it were protracted.

So the fearful night wore on ; the black scud was passing away, the stars shone out, and the four castaways began to hope that morning was at hand. Yet, ruthlessly, wave after wave came rolling over them, each with its high and monstrous head, curling white with snowy foam, though its sides were black and inky. Then there would be a roar as of thunder when each burst over the fragment of wreck,

engulfing and half choking the poor dripping wretches who clung to it in silence and despair.

But now, as dawn began to spread rapidly over the east, the sea went down, and the wind also; the waves ceased to roll over the broken deck, which floated steadily, and as it rose upheaved on each successive swell, the occupants cast around them eager glances from their bloodshot eyes, in the hope of descrying a sail.

Dawn came thoroughly in—a cloudy morning, but no sunshine. Ere long they could see the whole horizon; but there no vestige of a sail was visible, and now they looked blankly in each other's pallid faces.

"My poor crew!" said Bartelot, with a thick sob in his throat, but the exclamation had escaped him many times before; "second-mate, carpenter, sail-maker, steward, cook, boys, and all—all gone but us, Morley. Sad—deplorable, is it not?"

"Do not grieve for what is irreparable," said Morrison.

"If I saw you, Bill Morrison, my friend Ashton, and my old shipmate Noah, all safe, I don't care if I were shark-meat this minute," he resumed, bitterly.

"Don't say so, Bartelot, my old boy," replied Morley, with an affectation of spirit he was far from feeling: "you have behaved bravely, and done all

that man could do to save your ship. Take courage; you have buoyed me up many a day, when my heart had sunk to zero. Let me try to cheer you in turn."

"Cheer!" Tom repeated, shaking his head sadly, and still more bitterly, as he surveyed their home upon the waters.

"Oh, Heaven! to think of this being a bit of the old *Princess* we all loved so well!" groaned Morrison, looking almost affectionately on the frail planks over which the sea rippled at every heave.

"Aye, sir," chimed in Noah; "it *are* odd, but it was a bit of that same blessed deck, as was holy-stoned and prayer-booked, swabbed and squilgeed of a morning till it were white as snow—whiter a'most than the deck of her Majesty's yacht. I've poured half the sea over that deck, I have, when the head-pump was rigged for'ard of a morning, and now what is it, but only a bit of drift-wood, and we a clinging to it, like four wet barnacles? Lor' help us!"

"And bless our poor shipmates!" added Bartelot, pointing upwards.

"They are all gone, sir—found sailors' graves, every one of them," said Morrison; "the ship would fill, and go down the moment she parted aft."

"But you've done your duty, sir," said Noah;

"and can clear yourself of the ship's loss before any naval court in any part of the world. I only wish we were all afore one this blessed minute, instead o' drifting about here, without compass, biscuit, or 'bacca."

Now came the oppressive reflection that they were without food and without water.

Morley had read very recently the "Paul Huet" of Eugene Sue, and the more true story on which his romance is founded—the awful wreck of the *Medusa*, French frigate, and thus the horrors which her crew endured upon the raft came vividly and painfully before him now.

The saline property of the atmosphere, their long and repeated immersions in the ocean, the quantities of its water they had been compelled to swallow when the drenching waves broke over them, soon excited thirst. This longing was increased by heat, when the sun came forth; but as yet they had no desire for food.

All their energies were bent on watching the horizon around them, but no sail appeared; so the wreck continued to float listlessly about, without making way apparently in any direction.

A boat they might have rowed in the direction of the Cape of Good Hope, and though they might have failed to reach the coast, while minus food and water, they would always have increased their

chances of being picked up by a passing ship, homeward or outward bound; but on the wreck they were helpless, as if upon a desert rock fixed amid the sea.

The first day passed slowly, wearily on, and the sun verged westward in his course.

Now night descended on the sea. There was no moon, but the stars shone clearly and sharply.

Worn by emotion, by toil, suffering, and lack of sleep, they trusted to the security of their lashings, and strove to find rest, or oblivion, in slumber; but a half-wakeful doze was all they could achieve. Each body lay, to all appearance, torpid; but the anxious soul slept not, so each had his own keen active thoughts and dreams.

Tom Bartelot conjured up a certain pretty little English face, whose smiling blue eyes were associated with many a summer evening walk among the sylvan scenery of Richmond Park, in the gardens of Kew, and visits to Hampton Court.

Morrison's heart was in his old mother's cottage, where he first saw the light, by the broad waters of the Dee, that roll from the hills of Crathie and Braemar in "the bonnie north country;" for he had intended, at the close of another voyage, to go home to Scotland, with all his earnings and wages, to spend them with her, and for her only; but all that seemed hopeless now, though the hum of the

sea in his ears, as it rippled against the wreck, suggested the surf that in boyhood he had seen breaking over the Black Dog of Belhelvie.*

Poor old Gawthrop, with his grizzled whiskers, and lips baked in dry salt, dreamt of neither father, mother, nor love—for all who loved old Noah were dead long ago; but he had a vision of a stiff jorum of

"Boatswain's grog—just half and half,"

such as he used to get in the *Haurora*, of fifty guns; while Morley Ashton thought, and dreamed, and murmured to himself of Ethel Basset.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

He had now been long absent from Ethel, and been long mourned by her as one who was lost to her for ever, and numbered with the dead. And now death menaced him again!

He had been saved from destruction by his friend—saved from a death by starvation, or despair, at Acton Chine; but only to perish with him here amid the lonely waters of the South Atlantic; for this time it seemed that he was too surely doomed to die—an idea rendered all the more bitter by a conviction that Ethel would never, and could never,

* A rock on the Aberdeenshire coast, so named from its appearance at low water.

know the dark story of his disappearance, for no mortal lips could tell her save those of Hawkshaw.

Morley felt that he might perish now; that she would never learn the true character of his rival; of his own awful escape from Acton Chine; of his journey to Rio de Janeiro; of his sufferings on the raft, till relieved by death; of how he had been tossed hither and thither by fortune's unrelenting hate, and how deeply and devotedly he loved her.

By this last misfortune, the wreck, more than all the others, he might, by dying, leave her to become the wife of Hawkshaw, the would-be assassin!

So another night passed over, and the raft, or wreck, still floated darkly, silently there; and now those who were thereon had ceased to speak, even in whispers.

Another day dawned—a day of glorious sunshine; but no food, no water, no hope came with it; for not a sail was in sight, and their eyes ached with weariness in searching the faint blue watery line that marked where the sky and ocean met.

They were becoming very feeble now, and the cravings of nature were maddening.

Their hair was encrusted by salt, as white as hoar-frost, their lips were baked, their tongues parched. Already they had become gaunt and white, hollow-cheeked, and old-looking, with eyes bloodshot and wild.

Their feet and legs were sore and sodden by long immersion in the brine, and their whole bodies were rendered stiff and weary by the wet ropes which lashed them to the taffrail—a means of security which they dared not unloose or relinquish for a moment.

Ere long they were in a species of delirium.

Hunger brought its own fantastic and exciting suggestions of well-cooked viands, of hearty homely dishes, steaming and savoury, roasts and stews, puddings and pies; but thirst, agonising thirst, suggested ideas of cool rivers, amid which snows were dissolving; of lonely mountain tarns, where the brown trout sported under the broad-leaved water-docks, and where the wild bird swam; of glassy meres, of crystal rills, that murmured under old oak trees, or shady drooping willows, with dark green sprays, and water-lilies that dipped therein; of iced champagne, that effervesced in crystal goblets; of sparkling hock and seltzer-water; of jolly London stout, all brown, with its creamy froth; of every impossible luxury that they had not, and never more might feel upon their cracked lips and dry, hard, arid tongues!

A dead bird!—it was a huge albatross, with wings outspread—floated slowly past them on the glassy oil-like sea, thus indicating a current that ran eastward.

They were all too weak to attempt to swim for it; so, wolfishly, with haggard eyes and longing appetites they watched the wretched carrion for hours, until it floated out of sight.

Then three nautilus shells, with purple sails outspread, passed near them, and, to Morley's excited vision, they seemed like large Roman galleys, or fairy barges, at a vast distance—such craft as he had read of in legends of the Rhine, in fairy tales, and knightly ballads.

And now came Mother Carey's chickens, hopping and tripping about the wreck, and on the ripples round it—merrily and happily, like brown sparrows in a farmyard at home.

About the setting of the sun, they were roused from their listlessness by the sudden apparition of a large vessel, barque-rigged—that is, with the fore and mainmasts of a ship and a mizzen like a schooner's mainmast, with a long spanker-boom—bearing down towards them.

There was a fine breeze blowing; she had all her canvas set, and ran on a taut bowline.

"A ship! a sail! a sail!" they exclaimed together.

"Now, blessed be Heaven!" said Tom, "we are saved at last! Hurrah—hurrah!"

She was painted a kind of yellowish white; her side chains and hawse-holes, and all her iron work,

looked red and rusty, as if she had been long in tropical waters.

With almost inarticulate lips they sought to hail her, and waved their hands in frantic glee as she came on, with the white foam curling under her bluff bows, where the old copper was green, and covered with barnacles. Her side was lined with the faces of her crew, who seemed to be in earnest conference, and some of whom gesticulated violently.

She seemed to be foreign by her build and rig, as well as by the scarlet and blue shirts and fur caps of her men.

Now she was close to them, and the white flag, with the black eagle of Prussia, was hoisted at her gaff peak; now she would certainly be hove in the wind, with a mainsail laid aback, and have a boat lowered to relieve them.

So close was she, that the wheel revolved to keep her away a point or two, lest she might run the frail wreck under with her bluff bows, as she sheered past.

Tom hailed in English "to relieve them from misery—to save them, for the love of mercy and of God!"

He spoke imploringly, for a sudden doubt had chilled his heart.

Hoarsely the hail was responded to in German,

and the barque passed on—on, without lifting tack or sheet, without lowering a boat, or tossing a single biscuit, to those four men who were all but dying on the wreck! The Prussian—she was the *Einicheit*, of Dantzic—stood away on her course, and left Bartelot and his three friends in an agony of disappointment and despair that bordered on madness!*

With such terrible emotions in their hearts, as no pen could portray, they saw her slowly diminish in distance, and vanish into the yellow haze that overspread the evening sea. Then once more night descended on the world of waters, and again they were alone—more alone, they felt, than ever, for even their fellow-beings had abandoned them.

During all that night Morley Ashton was delirious.

Dreams and thoughts of Acton Chase and woods, that rustled their green leaves in the soft west wind; of golden fields, of bearded grain, that waved like yellow billows beneath its breath; of the voices of the larks that soared aloft into the blue sky, and of the cushat dove that cooed to its mate in the leafy dingle; the ring of the village chimes, and of children's merry voices—came strongly to memory, with the comforts of the land he never more might tread—English home he never more might see.

* For the infamous conduct of this Prussian crew to a Scottish ship in distress, see any paper of May 26, 1864.

Anon, strange monsters seemed to come out of the starlit bosom of the glassy deep, to bob and dance, to glare and jabber, with faces green, white, lilac, and rose-coloured; and all as if to mock their misery.

These, however, were only seaweed and foambells, or floating blubber, to which the water gave unusual size and phosphorescent light, while the sufferers' giddy brains and weakened eyesight lent them wild and fantastic forms.

Poor Tom Bartelot must have been quite deranged; for more than once Morley heard him singing what seemed to be a scrap of his old drinking song, and his voice sunk into a childish quaver at the couplet:

> "Oh, deign, ye kind powers, with this wish to comply,
> May I always be drinking yet always be dry."

Then he suddenly changed his note to a kind of hoarse wail, as he sang:

> "King Death was a rare old fellow,
> He sat where no sun could shine;
> He lifted his hand so yellow,
> And pledged us in coal-black wine."

He soon after became senseless, and hung, as if asleep, drooping, alas! it might be, dead, in the lashings that secured him to the taffrail.

Towards the morning of that terrible night, Morley felt life ebbing within him, and, as it ebbed,

he had a last wild dream—wild, indeed; but too delicious to be true.

A long, long time seemed to elapse, but another day had dawned, and a ship—the false, cruel Prussian barque of yesterday—had returned in quest of them. She lay to, a boat came off, he heard the rattle of the fall tackles, and the splash of the water. They were, he thought, rescued; he felt the lashing that bound his swollen limbs cut by a seaman's jack-knife, and now kind faces and kind hands were around him, and gentle voices were murmuring in his ear.

Cool wine and grateful cordials seemed to be poured between his parched lips, and then to be suddenly withheld when he would have imbibed more.

Oh, the madness of this tantalising and most feverish dream, for Ethel Basset seemed to be there!

Ethel, with her sweetly feminine and dear affectionate face, was bending over him; her lips were close to his, her kiss was on his cheek; but he could neither respond nor speak, for Hawkshaw's visage, pale and wrathful, was between them, with knitted brows and glaring eyes, as he had seen it last, when he fell beneath his hand at Acton Chine.

Then he seemed to sleep, to die; for he felt and remembered no more.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CAPTAIN HAWKSHAW MAKES A DISCOVERY TO LEEWARD.

On the night the *Princess* was lost, the *Hermione* did not escape the same storm, which probably traversed in a circle all the waters of the South Atlantic.

It was no doubt the mere skirt of the tempest which affected her, as the sky around was clear, and the stars shone brilliantly.

Her jib was blown out of the bolt-rope and split to ribbons, and she had her topsails close-reefed.

"Stow what remains of the jib," ordered Captain Phillips; "into the netting with it—quick, men; cheerily now, and up with the foretopmast-stay-sail."

As soon as this was done, he added:

"Go below, the watch, and take a nap if you can, for it may blow great guns before morning."

"It is blowing three gales in one as it is," said Mr. Quail. "The water comes waist-high in the lee-scuppers, and washes right chock aft to the taffrail."

The *Hermione* was tearing through the sea upon the wind, so she rolled little, but the wild waves came pouring over her catheads and topgallant forecastle, and over the weather bulwarks, swashing and plashing their snowy spray far above the level of her main-courser.

"Who is at the wheel?" asked the captain, who was standing at the break of the quarter-deck.

"Badger, the long Yankee," replied Mr. Quail.

"All seems quiet among these rascals forward; and they worked cheerily enough to-night."

"All quiet as yet, sir; but we don't know when their little game may begin."

"If they should have changed their minds?" suggested Phillips.

"No chance of that, sir," said Quail, shaking his head.

"Or, if the doctor was mistaken?"

"Impossible, sir," said Quail, shaking his head again—it was under a cloud of spray this time; "and, even if he was so, we can't mistake the disappearance of poor Manfredi after Sharkey's ugly threats, and their mutinous spirit in general. As first mate, I have seen enough of it to last my time at sea."

"I am prepared for the worst, at all events," responded Phillips, in the same low voice, as he instinctively felt for the butt of the revolver pistol in

his breast-pocket, and ascended to the weather side of the poop.

Veering round to the south-eastward, the wind was soon dead against the ship, which laboured hard, though running close-hauled, and, while beating to windward, her head was many points away from her proper course.

She was running fast through the water—ten knots an hour at least—but was making great leeway. The strain on the weather-rigging was great; there every shroud, rope, and halyard were tight as iron wire, while to leeward they were all blown out in wavy bights and bends, especially at every lurch.

There was never a lull in the fierce gale, and, with every wave that burst against her bows, the *Hermione* seemed to roll, or swerve, bodily off to leeward.

On this night poor Mr. Basset was in great mental misery, lest, amid the tempest, for to such the gale nearly amounted, the crew should put their nefarious designs in execution; but they had their hands too full of necessary work to find time for mischief then.

He twice ventured on deck, but, to the landsman's eye, the aspect of that wild, stormy sea, visible under a starry and cloudless sky, so appalled him, that each time he returned to the cabin with

such visible signs of tremor or emotion, that Ethel, who had found the impossibility of sleeping, and had hastily thrown on her morning wrapper and shawl, joined him, and sat caressingly by his side.

Pale, anxious, and lovely she looked in her white-frilled dress; and now every sound on deck made her father start with agitation.

"Is the gale increasing, papa?" she asked, for the twentieth time.

"Undoubtedly it is—but the captain laughs at it, and says his ship is strong and stout."

"How soundly dear Rose sleeps amid all this hurly-burly."

"Bless the poor child—oh yes; but go to bed beside her, darling, we have little fear to-night—for the ship, at least."

"Have we aught to fear from the sea, papa?"

Mr. Basset did not reply.

"You are silent, papa," resumed Ethel, scanning his features keenly and affectionately, and patting his cheek with her delicate hand; "then there *is* some danger of which you do not tell me. Oh, papa, what is this you would conceal from me, who, I know, am all the world to you?"

"You are, indeed, all the world to me now, Ethel—you and Rose," replied the poor man, in a broken voice, as his eyes filled, and his heart swelled with uncontrollable anxiety and emotion; "but there,

dear, there, kiss me, and go to bed; don't waken Rose—let the poor child sleep while she may."

And leading Ethel to her cabin, he pushed her gently in, and closing the door, lay down on the stern-locker to watch, but not to sleep.

This gale blew steadily for more than eight-and-forty hours, during which the *Hermione* carried as little canvas as possible, yet she made so much lee-way as to be blown far to the southward of the Cape—how far was known only to Captain Phillips and his two mates, Mr. Quail and Mr. Foster, as they had tacitly agreed to keep the crew in total ignorance of the ship's working or progress, hoping, by doing so, to delay, if they could not ultimately frustrate, any dark plans the intending mutineers had formed.

During all this gale, which showed no signs of abatement until the evening of the second day, Ethel and her sister remained in the cabin with old Nurse Folgate, who, with all her love for them, was deploring the moment of weakness in which she consented to leave the leafy seclusion of Acton-Rennel, "to go forth a-voyaging round the world, nobody knew to where."

Dr. Leslie Heriot found much to keep him below, too; and thus, by day and by night, according to the plan formed and already described, there was

always at least one armed man guarding them and the cabin-door.

As for poor Mr. Basset, he never quitted the side of his daughters now, until he saw them into their little cabin for the night; and Ethel, who soon perceived her father's new solicitude and affectionate anxiety, was quite at a loss to understand what caused it.

None knew how the lots had fallen, or whose cast of the dice had been highest in the forecastle bunks of the *Hermione*; but many of her crew, when they came on deck, on the morning subsequent to the amiable discussion so luckily overheard by Dr. Heriot, bore unmistakable marks of a conflict, in the shape of blackened eyes, swollen noses, and, in more than one instance, a slash or stab from a knife.

Whatever were the ultimate intentions of these men, matters remained unchanged on board the ship, the duty of which was carried on excellently during the gale, for then every man did his duty readily and cheerfully, either by force of habit, or from the knowledge that to do so would save themselves much trouble and probable danger.

No doubt they deemed it better to wait for an opportunity after they were assured of being past the Cape, when they would seize the ship, and, as the doctor heard suggested, haul up for the Mozam-

bique Channel, a very unwise idea on their part, as, in the narrow sea, they ran the imminent risk of being overhauled by some man-of-war, homeward bound, or transport full of troops—chances to be avoided in the open Indian Ocean.

The tempest had blown them to the westward, and also considerably to the southward of the Cape, which lies in latitude 33.5.42 South, and longitude 18.23.15 East. But the morning of the third day came in clear and calm; there was a gentle breeze from the eastward, and the ship was running close-hauled, with her port-tacks on board, and everything set upon her that would draw, even to triangular skysails and maintopgallant staysails, so that her hull seemed a mere black speck under such a cloud of white canvas.

And the glorious morning sun cast her shadow far along the smooth ocean to the westward, as she cleft its waters swiftly and steadily with her gallant prow, from which a white female figure, representing the Hermione of the classical age, the daughter of Venus and wife of Cadmus, with Vulcan's golden necklet round her slender throat, spread her graceful arms above the foam.

The fourth and fifth days after the gale were serene and lovely in the extreme.

There was scarcely need for the watch to rig the head-pump for the last three mornings; washed by

the waves of the recent gale, the decks were white as snow, and not even a shred or thread of spunyarn could be seen about the wheels of the carronades, the coamings of the hatches, or the mouths of the scupper-holes.

Breakfast over, Rose and Ethel came on deck, and Doctor Heriot hastened after them with cushions, shawls, and wrappers, for the morning air in that extreme southern latitude was cold, though clear and bracing; even an iceberg was visible at the far and blue horizon to the westward, an object to which Heriot drew the attention of the sisters, and promptly arranged for them his telescope; but the fair voyagers had become quite used to such things, so Ethel betook herself to a novel, and Rose began a piece of crochet (which seemed like the web of Penelope) in expectation that her lover would sit by and converse with her.

Both seemed paler than usual, in consequence of the few days' confinement below. Their father was anxious still, and the poor man continued to linger about them, to hover near them, and instinctively his trembling hand felt for the loaded revolver he carried in secret, if one of the crew came near his daughters, and his heart beat quicker if even one glanced to them, for in him he suspected the winner by the dice-box of the two abhorred Barradas.

Hawkshaw, whom the young doctor's steady at-

tentions to the sisters galled and fretted, was up in the fore-rigging, somewhere, looking out for a sail, as no one on board longed for the appearance of a ship of war more than he did; so he kept one eye on the horizon, and another on the quarter-deck, where Ethel and Rose were seated, chatting and laughing.

Heriot had carefully examined, capped, and charged anew his revolver, and placed it in his breast-pocket before he joined them, so the crew very little suspected how completely all their superiors were forewarned and forearmed.

The two girls looked, if possible, lovelier than ever on this, as it will prove in the sequel, eventful morning, by a species of delicate pallor induced by the close atmosphere of the cabin; and as young Heriot gazed into their clear, full, earnest eyes, a fierce, high spirit swelled up in his heart, and he almost rejoiced that the terrible circumstances in which they were placed, sailing as it were with a volcano on board, would give him an opportunity of showing how dearly he loved Rose Basset, how willing he was to dare, alas! it might be to die for her!

Not that he would gain much by the last move, as reflection showed, and die he might, perhaps, by the hands of some of those ruffians, before she could be succoured and protected, and then there was acute

agony in the contemplation of what she might endure when he could neither see nor avenge it.

"Look, Ethel dear," Rose suddenly exclaimed with girlish delight, "there is a great swan asleep on the water."

"A swan here?" queried Ethel.

"It is an albatross," said the doctor, smiling, "and sleeping sound enough, certainly. I could almost toss a biscuit on his back."

There, not twelve yards distant from the ship's side, on the smooth surface of the sea, was a great albatross, with plumage white as snow—a bird whose pinions may have measured twelve feet from tip to tip—fast asleep, and floating with his huge head under his wing.

Slowly he was upheaved upon each huge glassy swell, and slowly he sank down into the glassy vale between them, sleeping, as Ethel said, just as she had seen the swans on Acton Mere at home, and now this lonely bird was perhaps 300 miles from land.

When first descried he was upon the weather-bow, and now he was upon the lee quarter, so rapidly the ship left far astern this great bird of the "Ancient Mariner," enjoying his nap, all undisturbed, upon the morning sea.

Hawkshaw, who was pretty far up the fore-rigging, now drew the attention of some of the crew, who

were at work upon the foreyard, greasing the sling thereof, reeving new bunt-lines to the foot of the foretopsail, &c., to a small dark object that was floating on the water at a great distance, and the discussion that ensued about it soon caught the attention of the anxious and active Mr. Quail, who was standing at the break of the quarter-deck, for the *Hermione* had a species of half poop, so he descended into the waist and hailed the talkers.

"Fore-top there!"

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Bill Badger and Zuares Barradas.

"Do you see anything, that you keep such a bright look-out to leeward, eh?"

"Yes, sir; there is something in sight," replied Zuares.

"Something; well, what is it?"

"The head o' the great sea-sarpent, I rayther reckons it to be," replied Bill Badger, impudently; "I sees his row o' grinders standing up above the water."

"Grinders, you Yankee swab," responded Mr. Quail (under his breath, however, for the fid-maul and a couple of iron marlinespikes were lying in the foretop, and one of these might fall out of it, by accident); "what you call grinders are the timber-heads of a piece of wreck—if not, I am as green as a cabbage! A piece of wreck in sight to leeward,

sir," he reported down the skylight to Captain Phillips, who came promptly on deck, telescope in hand.

"Whereabouts, Mr. Quail?"

"There, sir; you can see it now under the leach of the forecourse, when the ship rises—can you make it out?"

"Wreck it is, Quail; the taffrail and sternpost of a vessel. Ease her off a bit, Pedro; edge down towards it," said the captain to the elder Barradas, whose strong hands grasped the handsome, brass-mounted wheel of the *Hermione*; "we are raising it fast."

"If there ain't men a-clinging to it, I'm a Dutchman!" shouted Badger, from the foretop.

"The fellow is right," said Phillips, politely passing his glass to Mr. Basset; "human figures are visible on it. Ready the lee quarter boat, there—clear the fall tackles; keep her on a little just as she is, Mr. Quail, and then back with the mainyard."

"All the crew crowded to the leeside of the deck now, and their entire attention was riveted on the piece of drifting wreck which lay like a log in the water; but towards which they were rapidly bearing down.

Ere long, four men could be distinctly seen upon it, but whether alive or dead none could say with

certainty, though all surmised the latter, as they made neither sign nor hail, but remained still, mute, and passive as the timber-heads to which they were lashed, and which rose and fell, slowly and sullenly, amid the sunny ripples of that calm morning sea.

## CHAPTER XII.

### DR. HERIOT'S PATIENTS.

Filled with the interest roused by this new episode, the crew, for a time, forgot everything in their desire to know what ship this had been, where she hailed from, to relieve the sufferers, and to learn all they had undergone; for, even in his worst moods, Jack is always ready for anything, and the more of novelty it contains, the better for him.

The four drooping figures could be distinctly discerned now, with their heads bare, their faces blanched and pale. Ethel and Rose were full of commiseration; already their gentle eyes were swimming in sympathetic tears. The former kept by the side of her father, and the latter, in her excitement, leant more heavily than usual, perhaps, on the arm of Dr. Heriot; and even old Nance Folgate had come out of her berth, and muttering "Lor' a mussy me!" from time to time, clung with cat-like tenacity to the nettings on the lee-quarter, to see the castaways, whom, she had no doubt, had

been devouring each other from time to time, till only four were left now.

"Back with the mainyard," shouted the captain; "to the braces, men; let go and haul!"

The lee-braces were cast off the belaying-pins; the weather hauled in, and the yard was slued round till the sail was laid flat to the mast; and now the great ship, which had been edged down towards the piece of wreck, as she lay to, rose and fell with slow, but regular and impatient heaves, on the swelling ridges of the sea, while, with a quick revolution of the double-sheaved blocks, the fall-tackle fell and the quarter-boat vanished from its davits with a splash into the sea alongside.

She was speedily manned: Mr. Foster, the second mate, took the tiller; Bill Badger, the Yankee; Joe, the steward; Quaco, the black Virginian, and Dr. Heriot (with Rose's entreaties to take care of himself, ringing in his ears), shipped their oars in the rowlocks, and she was shoved off.

"Happy go lucky! here's summut new, at all events," said Bill Badger, as he made the tough blade of the stroke-oar bend like a willow wand; for after a long, dull voyage like that of the *Hermione*, varied only by adverse winds and the loss of a mast at the Canaries—a voyage in which a few restless and roving spirits are shut up for many

weeks in the small compass of a ship—anything that may serve to relieve or vary the tedium and monotony of the life they lead is welcome; hence, a drifting wreck, with its contingent stories, mysteries, and the surmises it may occasion, is, perhaps, the most welcome, though least lively adventure they could meet with.

The proceedings of the boat's crew were watched with deep interest by those who lined the ship's side, about 500 yards off.

Mr. Foster pulled round the stern of the wreck, and was seen to stoop with his face close to the water, as if he was endeavouring to read (which was the case) the vessel's name, then sunk some feet below the surface, as the wreck was half submerged.

Then he sheered the boat alongside, and by the painter it was made fast to a timber-head; but almost immediately after, for fear of accidents, this was cast off, and she was simply held on by the boat-hook.

Mr. Foster, Dr. Heriot, and another stepped along the piece of quarter-deck, and were seen to be examining the four men, whom they relieved from their wet lashings by simply cutting these through with a slash of Quaco's jack-knife.

"Evidently, the poor fellows are *not* dead," said Captain Phillips, joyfully, as he clapped his fat hands together.

"How do you know, dear sir?" asked Ethel; "ah, the poor men, I do not see them move!"

"They are putting them into the boat to bring them aboard, Miss Basset. If they had been dead, there would have been little use in doing that."

"What would you have done in that case, captain?" asked Mr. Basset.

"Sunk each of 'em simply, with a round shot at his heels, as we did the poor fellow whom we found floating with the life-buoy. Mr. Quail, get some brandy and wine out of the cabin locker — some water, please, too."

"Oh, let me assist you, sir," exclaimed Ethel.

"And me—me too," added Rose, with enthusiasm.

"Stop, ladies, you'll only lose your footing and get a tumble, perhaps, the ship is pitching so; better stay where you are, and hold on by the side netting."

"Hush!" said Captain Phillips, suddenly; "silence on deck—silence fore and aft, for Dr. Heriot is hailing the ship, and waving his cap."

"What is it that he is saying?" asked several, as the doctor's clear voice came distinctly over the water.

"Captain Phillips," they heard him cry, "please to request the ladies to leave the deck."

"That is plain enough, miss," said Mr. Quail, touching his cap to Ethel.

"Why—for what must we go?" said Rose, pouting.

"You must permit me to lead you below, ladies," said the captain; "depend upon it, the doctor knows best. There is something there he does not wish you to see."

So Ethel, Rose, and the old nurse, to the intense mortification of the latter, left the deck, and retired to the cabin to wait the event.

The truth was that the worthy young doctor had found the four sufferers on the wreck, though not dead, as he fully ascertained on feeling their pulses, in such a frightful state of prostration and delirium, that he deemed it better Ethel and Rose should be spared the shock of their first appearance, and should not witness the conveyance of them up the ship's side.

"They are all in the boat now, and now she is shoved off. Give way, my boys — give way!" shouted the captain, whose kind, ruddy English face flushed with eagerness. "Lay out on your oars and pull with a will, for a glass of grog awaits you all."

To do them justice, the men in the boat needed no incentive; to the whole length of their arms they bent to their oars, and the boat came sheering alongside in a twinkling.

"In larboard oars, out fenders," said Mr. Foster, as he relinquished the tiller.

"Into the main-chains there, some of you, and bear a hand to get the poor fellows on board," said Captain Phillips, jumping down the short ladder at the break of the quarter-deck, just as four thin and wasted figures—their tattered clothes sodden and saturated by salt water, their matted hair encrusted with salt—were handed like children up the side, passed over the bulwark, and laid on the deck near the long-boat.

"Poor fellows, poor fellows! God help them," said Phillips, commiseratingly, as they seemed quite insensible. Their teeth were clenched, but their lips were far apart, cracked, parched, and, in some instances, bleeding. They breathed irregularly, and twitched their fingers convulsively.

"They must be your peculiar care for a time, doctor," said Mr. Basset, as Heriot flung his coat on the deck, and while rolling up his shirt-sleeves, rushed below to his medicine-chest.

"Boy, Joe—steward, bring wine and brandy here! Carpenter, get four comfortable hammocks slung in the 'tween decks; and you, Quaco, my darkey, get us plenty of hot water from the galley," cried Phillips.

"Yaas, sar," replied the sable Virginian, as he hastened forward with a bucket.

Every one bustled about, and even Sharkey, the sulkiest villain of that ill-assorted crew, made himself useful in some way, or fancied that he did so.

"These men are evidently British seamen," said the captain, as the doctor stooped over each, and raising his head, poured weak brandy-and-water, with some medicament therein, down his throat. "How thirstily they drink! One opens his eyes. All right, my friend, you'll soon come to," added the kind skipper, as he patted Morrison on the shoulder. "Now then," said he, "Mr. Quail, get the quarter-boat hoisted in, and fill the mainyard. Trim the ship to her course."

"Very good, sir."

It was soon done, and the *Hermione*, as she began again to walk through the water, soon left the piece of wreck astern.

"Did you make out the name of that unfortunate craft, Mr. Foster?"

"Yes, sir; but with difficulty."

"And what was it?"

Our readers, of course, anticipate the reply.

"The *Princess*, of London—ship rig evidently, from the side chains, the double row of dead eyes, and the gearing of the mizzenmast."

"All right. Now bring up the ship's log."

The four patients were taken below. A little food, such as might be made for children, arrowroot

with sherry, and so forth, was given to them, and greedily they devoured it. They were then stripped, sponged with warm fresh water, and lifted each into a comfortable hammock, the active young doctor, Mr. Foster, the captain and steward, working for them like servants and nurses with hearty good-will.

Gentle cordials were then administered, and soon after Heriot appeared in the cabin with a bright and smiling face, wearing the happy expression of one who, in doing a good action, has done his best, to report that they had fallen into a sound sleep, were all doing well, and would, he hoped, soon be free from danger.

"It was too bad of you to send us below like children," said Rose.

"And you think they will recover, doctor?" asked Ethel, interrupting some playful apology of Heriot's.

"Recover? Oh yes, and perhaps be with us soon at table, too; so poor Manfredi's seat may thus be filled. Like Banquo's, it has long been empty."

"Oh, Leslie, how can you jest thus?" whispered Rose.

"I don't jest, dearest," replied the doctor, deprecatingly. "I liked poor Adrian Manfredi too well to associate his idea now with a jest," he added,

gravely, as he thought of that night in the forecastle bunks, of the revelations he had heard, and the peril that was yet unaverted.

"Have the poor men said anything?" asked Ethel.

"Not much, Miss Basset, beyond a few indistinct and delirious mutterings."

"Could you gather who they were?"

"No; but they all seem to be seamen, save one."

"One?"

"Yes."

(How little could she dream who *this one was!*)

"And you are able to distinguish?" she resumed.

"At once—by their hands and general appearance."

"And this one, who is not a seaman?"

"Is a pale, and thin—but then he has been starved—and gentleman-like young man. Though half dead with privation, he made a whispered apology for the trouble he gave us."

"Poor fellow!" said Ethel, whose eyes glistened.

"Where was their vessel from?—how was she lost?—and where was she lost?" asked Rose.

"They are past telling all this now," said the doctor, smiling, and patting Rose's hand; "by to-morrow evening, perhaps, we shall learn all."

"I do long so to hear their story—how terrible it

must be—quite a nautical romance; and then, the other poor men of their ship, who have been drowned!"

"Yes, Rose," said Ethel, glancing at the captain and mate, who were each making an entry in his log or journal, "this incident will fill up an entire page of your diary."

"How—why?" asked Rose, reddening very perceptibly.

"For Lucy Page's perusal," said Ethel, with a smile that had a little mischief, or waggery, in it.

Rose grew redder, for her diary or journal of the voyage, which she had begun to keep (from the day she left Laurel Lodge), for the special perusal of her friend and gossip, Lucy Page, had proved rather a bore, and had been completely relinquished, as she could not consistently omit, and yet shrank from recording, memoranda of a certain little interview with the doctor, being naturally restrained therefrom by a certain awkwardness, if the eye of Jack Page, now almost a myth to her, as he has been, perhaps, to the reader, should peruse them also.

So Rose had ceased altogether to continue that interesting volume, which, we may presume, terminated abruptly on that night recorded in a previous chapter, when she and the doctor took a turn on deck to view the stars.

At this moment Cramply Hawkshaw entered the

cabin with an expression of face so scared, so altered, and so unmistakably wretched, that Ethel surveyed him with surprise; and then, with some commiseration, she kindly inquired if he was ill?

He complained of giddiness, and abruptly hastened on deck.

In fact, our ex-Texan officer had just come from between decks, where he had been visiting the doctor's patients.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CAPTAIN HAWKSHAW'S TROUBLES INCREASE.

Inspired by some emotion beyond curiosity—a feeling which it would be alike impossible to define or describe, Hawkshaw had gone between decks to look at the rescued men.

A man had been left to watch them. He was Bolter, the Canadian, to whom Dr. Heriot had given strict injunctions that the sleepers were not to be disturbed to gratify the mere curiosity of the crew; and he growled out a few words by way of warning to Hawkshaw, who, assuming a jaunty air, said:

"Now, my amphibious biped, how are your patients?"

"None of your names, mister," replied the Canadian, knitting his brows.

"You mistake me, my good fellow; I simply wished to know how our new friends are."

"Judge for yourself—blow'd if I know," was the sulky rejoinder, as Bolter replaced a tremendous expectoration (which he shot fairly over Hawkshaw's shoulder and out at the lee port) by a huge

quid; "but they seemed all goin' forren—out'ard bound, till the doctor hove 'em up fresh."

Each was in his hammock sleeping soundly, in that deep, drowsy torpor which enables even "the famished to escape from the pangs of hunger, and those who are perishing of thirst to escape for a time from the agony of the parched throat"—the sleep that covereth a man all over like a mantle, as honest Sancho Panza said, when, in the fulness of his heart, he blessed the great inventor thereof.

On tiptoe Hawkshaw passed from sleeper to sleeper.

One seemed a brawny and weather-beaten seaman, with grizzled locks, that were fast becoming gray; his bare and muscular chest was tattooed blue with gunpowder. This was our old friend Noah Gawthrop.

The second he looked at was somewhat hard-featured, with a high forehead, dark, full eyebrows, a well-shaped nose, and one of those prominent chins which bespeak firmness, decision of character, and indomitable perseverance. He was the Scotch mate, Bill Morrison.

The next was a pale, wan lad, whose handsome but attenuated features——

"Gad's fury!" burst from the lips of Hawkshaw, as the sudden recognition of those features struck a terror into his soul. "He here! he! Can it be possible?"

"Hullo, shipmate, what's the row?" said Bolter, looking up from a sea-chest, on which he was lolling, with his hands in his pockets; "'vast and belay this gab o' yours, or you'll waken 'em up, which is clear ag'in the doctor's orders."

"A mosquito stung me," said Hawkshaw, with a confusion which Bolter's perceptions were not fine enough to discover.

"A miskitty in these latitudes!" he exclaimed, mockingly. "I'm not so jolly green a hand as to believe that; but be off on deck, and leave me to keep my watch 'athout you. I may say this, though the ship is yet trimmed by the starn," added the fellow, with an insolent grimace, for like the rest of the crew, whom the Barradas influenced, he had a peculiar aversion for Hawkshaw.

The latter had now shrunk back, scarcely breathing, after assuring himself that the pale sleeper was indeed Morley Ashton; and then flashed upon his mind the keen and savage idea of getting him again removed from his path—by strangling him in his sleep, by putting poison in his food—and thus to send him out of the world ere his eyes again fully opened on it, and ere he, Hawkshaw, could be destroyed by the story he had to tell—by the great crime he had to reveal.

From the cabin, as we have told, he went on deck, and, desirous of avoiding all, of seeking that

solitude so impossible to find on board ship, he ascended into the fore-rigging, and sat there, amid a whirl, a chaos of thought, endeavouring to consider his prospects and position *now!*

Could he have been mistaken?

Impossible! The likeness had been too deeply impressed upon his memory since that awful night at Acton Chine; so he needed not to go between decks again, and, moreover, he dared not, lest Morley should awake and recognise him.

"How came he to escape death at the Chine? How to be sailing on the sea, and hereabout too?" thought Hawkshaw. "Oh, strange, and most accursed fatality! But for *me*, perhaps, we might have passed that piece of wreck—passed it unseen by all on board; but Fate is retributive; I was the first to descry, the first to be anxious to visit it."

For a moment, but a moment only, there came into his soul a gleam of joy, with the conviction that he was *not*, as he had so long remorsefully considered himself, the destroyer of a fellow-creature.

His victim—Heaven alone knew how!—had escaped, and was here alive and safe on board the *Hermione*. The ever-present idea of crime, with the *word* that had seemed ever before his eyes, on his lips, and in his heart—that shone in his dreams like those letters of flame that flashed on the vision of Belshazzar, could be a terror to him no longer.

The proverbs, that "Murder will out;" that "God's retribution will fall upon a murderer;" the law, that "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," would haunt him no more, —for this crime at least.

Such were his ideas for a moment; but the next, cold, selfish fear resumed its sway, and reason showed him that he was yet an assassin by intent—one whom his intended victim would expose, crush, and destroy, *if*—what?—he was not anticipated, crushed and destroyed *first*.

To Hawkshaw, this waif from the ocean was worse by a thousand degrees than his *rencontre* with the two Barradas.

To avoid the accusations, the shame and contumely that Morley Ashton could heap upon him, by the exposure of his falsehood, cruelty, and hypocrisy, he would, happily, now have relinquished even Ethel Basset, and all he had hoped from her father's patronage in the Isle of France. He would gladly have fled; but whither could he fly—how, when, where?—encompassed as he was by the sea? Save in its depth, there was no escape from this accursed ship, as there was no eluding his own conscience, in this floating prison, the *Hermione*—how he loathed the name!—with her crew of foul and treacherous mutineers.

He had one hope left. Morley might die on

getting food. He seemed so weak when brought on board, that the powers of digestion might be past, so that death might ensue from mere inanition.

But then his three companions would probably know his story, and were certain, if they survived, to reveal all Hawkshaw's guilt.

In the bitterness of his soul, he contemplated suicide, by slipping quietly overboard before the fatal recognition and discovery took place; but then came the fierce thought—if one of us is to perish, why should not *he?* and what time so fitting as now, when he is weak—almost dying? And thus, in his blind desperation, some of his old Mexican instincts or propensities grew strong within him, and he conceived the fiendish idea of strangling, or otherwise destroying, the half-dead lad in the night.

If marks of violence were found upon him, Hawkshaw knew there were so many "black sheep" in the forecastle, that one of them would readily be blamed for the crime.

A fierce eagerness to put himself in a safe position, to prevent the discovery that would blight him for ever, now possessed his whole soul, and, nerving it for the deadly task he had to do, made him long for the darkness and silence of night, when he resolved to make the attempt.

In this pleasant mood of mind, he heard the cabin bell rung by Joe the steward, announcing dinner,

and descending reluctantly from his perch in the fore-rigging, he went aft and took his seat between Ethel and Dr. Heriot, who were conversing gaily, while he had all the misery of having to veil over the secret serpent that gnawed at his heart, by an outward air of ease, security, and pleasantry, which, however, was nearly put to flight by Captain Phillips asking if he had seen the devil in the foretop, he looked so very white about the gills.

One portion of the conversation, maintained amid the clinking of glasses and plates, and the difficulty of balancing wine-glasses nicely when the ship rolled, was by no means calculated to restore his equanimity.

"Miss Basset," said the young doctor, blandly, "I hope you will come with me, and visit those poor fellows?"

"Yes, with pleasure. Rose and papa will come too."

"Well, it will cheer them a bit to see your dear, kind, pretty faces," said Captain Phillips, bowing to each sister, ere he drained his glass of sherry.

"You will quite spoil my girls by flattering them," said Mr. Basset, laughing.

"Our good captain is too honest for flattery," resumed Dr. Heriot; "but, Miss Basset, there is one fellow there who interests me much, though why I cannot say. Please to look at him well when

you see him. There is something very remarkable about him."

"Indeed, how, pray?"

"I judge by his bearing, and the general expression of his face. As a clever American writer says, of a similar impression, 'His is one of those cases which are more numerous than supposed by those who have never lived anywhere but in their own homes, and have never walked but in one line from their cradles to their graves. We must leave our straight paths for the by-ways and low places of life, if we would learn truths by strong contrasts, and in hovels, in forecastles, and among our own outcasts in foreign lands, see what has been brought upon our fellow-creatures by accident, hardship, or vice.'"

"Vice!" repeated Hawkshaw, with a nervous start, and in dread lest Morley had already discovered himself.

"Oh, do not misunderstand me. I merely completed the quotation. Heaven forbid, Mr. Hawkshaw, that I should attribute vice to one so gentle as my poor patient; but to-morrow, or at latest, next day, you shall see them, ladies, and I shall have much pleasure in being your guide between decks."

Hawkshaw felt as if the doctor was dictating his sentence of degradation and death; but he strove

to preserve an unmoved countenance, and to affect a pleasant demeanour.

Then he had to do the honours of the table to Ethel Basset, while his food seemed to choke him, with the agreeable consciousness that he whom she still loved, and for whom she still sorrowed, Morley Ashton, was asleep quietly in his hammock, on the other side of the after-bulkhead, and scarcely three feet distant from her chair.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### HAWKSHAW TURNS NURSE.

For that night all went well on board, as Dr. Heriot kept his watch between decks lest he should be wanted, and the next morning he reported a great improvement in his four patients, whom food, wine, and sleep were restoring so fast that he hoped by evening, perhaps, to learn their names, whence they came, and all about them.

Hawkshaw started on hearing this. That all the four had been found dead in their hammocks would have been to him the more welcome tidings.

"Aye, doctor, be sure about their names, as we must have them inserted in the log," said Captain Phillips. "Miss Basset, may we trouble you to pour out some tea for the poor fellows?"

Younger than his companions, Morley was the first to recover complete consciousness for a time on this morning. Naturally strong, lithe, and active, he had been wont, when ashore, to ride, shoot and fish, to be a first-rate bowler at cricket, a good hand with foils, gloves, single-stick, and to indulge in all hardy

sports; hence his vigorous frame was less shaken than those of Bartelot, Morrison, and Noah, who were his seniors in age.

The 'tween decks of the *Hermione* was a clear and airy place. Through a half-open port to leeward he could see the bright green sea running past in the morning sunshine; a pleasant breeze came down the half-grating of the open hatchway, and as the ship was running on a wind, the hammocks hung steadily.

The ship's bell clanged on deck; he heard a hoarse voice calling the watch, and gradually the dream-like events of the past day unfolded themselves with some coherence, and with a sigh of joy, an unuttered prayer of gratitude, he closed his eyes again, with the delicious conviction of being safe and in kind hands.

Ere long Boy Joe came from the cabin with warm tea and soaked biscuits for them.

How little did Morley know whose hands had poured it into the cups! And now, refreshed, and aware of each other's presence, all swinging side by side in their hammocks, Bartelot and Morrison began to converse with him.

This roused old Noah, who had dozed off to sleep again; so he began to mutter hoarsely in a dream:

"All starbowlines ahoy; come, tumble up the larboard watch."

"What is the matter, Noah?" asked Bartelot.

"It is that 'ere smatchet of a marine drummer," replied Gawthrop, looking up vacantly.

"He is dreaming of the old *Aurora*, of fifty guns," said Morrison, in a weak voice, quite unlike his own. "Hollo, Noah, old fellow; you've not unroved your life-lines yet, eh?"

"No, mate, thank Heaven," he replied, in something of the same childish treble; "nor you. And you shall see the Black Dog of Bellhelvie yet, as I hopes one of these blessed days to see Dungeonness Light and the buoy at the Nore."

"Here, shipmate, drink this, and talk after," said Joe, the steward, as he held another cup of warm tea (in which a whipped egg was substituted for milk) to the lips of Noah, who drained it at a draught, and then looked less wild and more awake.

"Go ahead, old boy," said Joe, a curly-headed, good-humoured-looking English lad, as he tucked the blanket about Noah's shoulders; "it is tea for dunnage, and soft biscuits for ballast just now. By-and-by, it will be grog and old horse for cargo, eh?"

"It's the 'tween decks that did it," muttered Noah. "I thought I was aboard the old *Haurora* in the Black Sea, with the boatswain ahead in the dingy, seeing all the yards squared by the lifts and braces."

Bartelot sank into slumber again, but Morley

began to be more lively and awake, and proceeded to compare with Morrison the notes and incidents of yesterday, and how they came to be rescued. Their voices sounded strangely to themselves and to each other, as at times they sank into husky whispers.

Morrison had seen much of the world. In the words of his countryman, a poor sailor too (Falconer, the doomed author of the "Shipwreck"), he had been in every climate under the sun.

> "Where polar skies congeal the eternal snow,
> Or equinoctial suns for ever glow.
> Smote by the freezing or the scorching blast,
> 'A ship-boy on the high and giddy mast,'
> From regions where Peruvian billows roar
> To the bleak coasts of savage Labrador.
> From where Damascus, pride of Asian plains,
> Stoops her proud neck beneath tyrannic chains,
> To where the Isthmus, laved by adverse tides,
> Atlantic and Pacific seas divides.
> But while he measured o'er the painful race,
> In fortune's wild, illimitable chase,
> Adversity, companion of his way,
> Still o'er the victim hung with iron sway."

Morrison was deeply thankful to Providence for his rescue; and on the first night of their being saved, Morley could remember, through his dreams, hearing the poor fellow praying very devoutly in his hammock, and in his own national dialect, which grew all the broader and more Doric as he communed with God and himself.

On the afternoon of the day, so pregnant with events of importance to him personally, Cramply Hawkshaw felt himself impelled, on various pretences, to keep aloof from those who shared the cabin with him; for he was in momentary dread that Dr. Heriot, to whom the name of Morley Ashton had been rendered quite familiar by the confidences of Rose Basset, would enter, and startle all by announcing *who* was one of the four men rescued from the wreck.

The better to achieve his dastardly project, he volunteered to attend them on this night between decks; and his offer, though it excited some surprise, was at once accepted by Dr. Heriot, who gave him several directions as to the small quantities of food and diluted wine they were to receive, if they required nourishment.

So Hawkshaw drank deeply, mixing brandy and sherry, to nerve himself for the dark purpose he had conceived; and, to conceal his pallor, his restlessness and wretchedness, he secluded himself in his own berth, and strove to sleep; but there was no sleep for him.

Thoughts maddened him, and he muttered to himself inaudibly, while, with a hot and trembling hand, he wiped the bead-drops from his aching brow.

"Why should I waver or shrink now?" he asked himself—not aloud, for fear of being overheard;

"what may I not dare, who have dared everything, I who have risked all? For the past I have no compunction now. Another might have done all those things as well as I, for I did not create myself, neither did I scheme out my own accursed destiny. Is there a demon within me, or is there one presiding over me—some fiend, some angel of darkness, whom I cannot see, but to whose whispers I am compelled to listen? Why does this wretched boy cross my path again? Why does the sea—why does the grave—give up its dead, as if to haunt, to tempt, to goad me into crime on one hand, if I would not lose name, honour, consideration, respect, and, it may be, Ethel and affluence, on the other? I had thought to be good, and loyal, and true for her sake, even though she loves me not; but all in vain. Ethel to marry me? Oh, that would be like a white moss-rose entwined with the deadly hemlock! Had Heaven not impelled or abandoned me, and had Hell not allured and prompted me, perhaps I had not been the creature I find myself to-night. *Caramba!* it is a game of desperation between this Ashton and me. The ball is yet at my foot, and shall I not strike it? Yes, and with a vengeance, too!"

Watch after watch was called; the half-hourly bells of the ship seemed to be rung every five minutes, instead of every thirty.

The night, solemn and starry, approached more

swiftly than he could have wished; and yet he longed that the fatal time was past—that the terrible deed he had to do was done.

Thus he lay on his bed, almost perspiring with mental agony and with criminal sophistry, gradually nursing himself into the conviction that the first law of nature—self-protection and self-preservation—rendered that deed imperative, needful, and requisite.

He almost consoled himself by the idea that there was but *half* a life to crush out; for was not Morley nearly half dead already?

Darkness had set in, before he missed daylight, so completely had his mind and thoughts been abstracted and turned inward; thus he received a species of electric shock, when the curtain of his berth was withdrawn by Heriot, who said:

"Now, then, Mr. Hawkshaw—come, tumble up, old fellow—eight bells have struck; it is twelve o'clock, and you have not been 'tween decks yet to look after these men."

"Twelve—twelve o'clock is it?" he stammered, with confusion, as he leaped out.

"Yes, to a minute; the ladies and all have supped and turned in. By Jove! you've had a long spell in your berth. Can you make your way forward alone?"

"Oh yes," replied Hawkshaw, who reeled like a tipsy man, for the ship was now running before the

wind, so she rolled till her lower studdingsail-booms nearly touched the water.

"You have your revolver, of course?"

"Yes," said Hawkshaw, with chattering teeth.

"Ah! we never know what may happen. By-the-by, I have got the names of those four sea-waifs; but the captain has gone to bed."

"And who are they?" asked Hawkshaw, in a faint voice, and half averting his face.

Heriot opened his note-book, and drawing nearer the cabin lamp, read:

"*Thomas Bartelot, late master of the 'Princess,' of London, a* 300*-ton ship, from Rio last; William Morrison* (countryman of mine) *first-mate of the same; Noah Gawthrop, a seaman*——"

"And the fourth?" asked Hawkshaw, in agony, as Heriot paused.

"A young cabin passenger. I did not get his name, as the poor fellow was sound asleep. They are the soul survivors of the ship. Good night; we have a spanking breeze, and carry topmast stun'sails. Take my poncho wrapper in addition to your railway rug."

"Why?"

"You'll find it cold enough, watching between decks till sunrise."

"Thanks. Good night," muttered Hawkshaw, through his teeth, which the poor wretch clenched,

to prevent them chattering, so strong were his emotions, as he passed through the door of the after bulk-head, and sought his way, by lantern light, to that place which was to be the scene of his great crime, where, all unconscious of his entrance, Morley and his three companions were swinging in their hammocks.

About four hours after this, a cry—almost a yell rang through the silent ship, startling the watch on deck and the man at the helm, terrifying Mr. Basset (whose duty it was to watch at the cabin door), bringing Captain Phillips, Mr. Quail, and Dr. Heriot from their berths, in dread that the great crisis of the voyage had come, that the mutineers were in arms; there, too, were Ethel and Rose, in their white-laced night-dresses, the latter with her rich hair all falling over her neck, peeping fearfully from their cabin door, while Nurse Folgate had buried herself under her bed-clothes, for that cry, which "pierced the night's dull ear," was one of mortal agony, and it seemed to come from—*between decks!*

## CHAPTER XV.

### A BITER BITTEN.

After leaving the doctor, Hawkshaw, to gather "Dutch courage," took a last mouthful from his brandy flask, and with his slippers on, stole softly and stealthily between decks, so softly that his entrance was unheard by our four friends, whom he found awake, and conversing in low tones; so he seated himself on a chest, with his face completely in shadow, and there he remained listening, and scarcely daring to breathe, for with every roll of the ship the four hammocks swung regularly to and fro, side by side, from port to starboard, and the outer one, in which Morley lay, nearly touched the watcher's head at times.

The air-port was closed now, and the place was lighted by the feeble rays of a ship-lantern, which swung from one of the beams.

In shadow, as we have said, and with a broad tarpaulin hat slouched over his stealthy cat-like eyes, that flashed with malignant light, Hawkshaw sat, or crouched, listening, watching, and waiting for the

time that would suit the attempt, eagerly, and all but breathlessly, and the duration seemed interminable, for he had no watch, his gold repeater having been so summarily appropriated by Pedro Barradas.

Morley spoke, and his voice, so long heard only in troubled dreams, now thrilled through the heart of Hawkshaw, causing sharp pangs of fear and agony; yet Morley's remark was a very simple one; but his voice, like the voices of the others, was husky and weak.

"Oh, the delight of such a cozy bed as this, after all we have undergone! Eh, Tom!"

"Yes, Morley, lad," replied Bartelot; "but I should like to know what craft we are on board of, and for where bound. I quite forgot to ask the doctor."

"She's true British at all events, by her build 'tween decks, captain," said Noah Gawthrop. "Thank God for all his mercies, 'specially to a rough old salt like me. He was very good and kind to remember a poor old feller like Noah, that he was, when there are so many younger and better folks to take care of. But I think the doctor mentioned her name, captain."

"Her—who?"

"Why the ship, I mean, sir."

"Yes—I am sure I heard it; she is the—the—"

(Hawkshaw trembled as Tom paused, for if the name was uttered in Morley's hearing, he — the listener—was lost!) "Well, it is strange that I don't remember; but her skipper's name is Phillips, and she hails from London. I made out that somehow."

"I know one Phillips—Bill Phillips, who was lost in the Straits of Sunda. He was once captain of the brig *Erminia*," said Morrison.

"*Herminya!*" replied Gawthrop, "that is the name o' the identical craft as we're aboard of; but she is too large—too broad in the beam for a brig."

"I am weary of speaking, mates, and wish to sleep," said Bartelot, yawning; "here, under a good deck of British oak, we may take a long spell of it without fear; and yet I can't help thinking of the poor *Princess*, and all who perished with her. Their faces are always before me."

"And that was a waluable cargo o' hers, that was," added Noah, "and a power o' trouble we took with the sugar and 'bacca casks at Rio. Oh, lor, to think of all that 'bacca goin' to Davy Jones, and never a leaf of it being smoked or cut in quids! She was steeved to within a fathom of her beams, she was; and then we had Californy hides for dunnage to the hatches—aye, aye, all gone, and I'll never have another watch-mate like old Ben Plank again!"

"Poor Ben!" said Morrison; "he'll never more cheer the lads in the forecastle, or on the watch of a clear night, with the 'Bay of Biscay' or 'Tom Bowling,' or lead the chant of 'Time for us go,' when shipping the capstan bars. A better crew than ours never hove up anchor!"

With a purpose so cruel and deadly in his mind, it may be imagined with what exasperation and impatience Hawkshaw listened to a conversation so trivial, and maintained so drowsily at intervals. He began to hope they were dropping asleep, when old Gawthrop spoke again.

"Oh, warn't that warm tea delicious this morning, captain! I doesn't think as I'll ever take kindly to grog again, but become a regular quaker and teetotaller."

"Not even thumb-grog, Noah, eh—on a wet night, when a shout comes down the forescuttle, of 'All hands reef topsails!'" said Bartelot laughing.

"I am almost afraid to sleep," said Morrison, "for dreams of the wreck always come with it, and again I seem to find myself up to my neck in cold salt water. I had often in memory, while we were drifting about, a story my mother, poor woman! used to tell me, when I was a laddie at home, and played truant frae the school, and when she wished to frighten me into good behaviour; so between sleeping and waking I used to think sometimes I

was one of the doomed men she used to speak of."

"Doomed, mate; how?" asked Morley, raising his voice; "how were they so?"

"It was the belief of some of the seafaring folk who dwell in the north of Scotland, that those among them who were wicked and sinful in their lives were roused in the night by the knocking of a skeleton hand on their cottage doors. The tap sounded like that of a bony or fleshless hand, though neither the hand or arm of the summoner were visible to mortal eyes. Compelled by a power they dared not, and could not resist, those who were so summoned left their snug beds, their wives and bairns (if they had them), and went, awe-stricken and sick with horror, down the beach, where at such a time there was always a heavy sea rolling in white foam, a black scud drifting overhead and a storm coming on. Compelled by the same mysterious power that brought them forth, the shivering wretches had to step on board a long, black, coffin-shaped boat (which was always sunk to its gunnel in water), and then they shoved off to sea. A grinning skull formed the figure-head of this grim barge, and human bones the thole-pins. Then a great dark cloud spread itself like a sail on the laughing wind, and away they were borne careering into the offing of the black and midnight

sea, from whence there was no return, for there they had to cruise for ever, like Vanderdecken at the Cape, until the final day of Doom! Many a time such boats have been seen, driving past the lighthouse on Buchanness, and the deep caverns of that tremendous shore, where the sea bellows for ever and ever—sailing on and on, towards the north, the shrieks of the despairing mingling with the wind, on a cold winter night, when the sleet and rain were sowing all the German sea."

"Such a diabolical story!" exclaimed Morley.

"Well, that *is* a lively legend of the north of Scotland," added Bartelot; "but now silence, mates, and let us to sleep, if we can."

Before this end, so desirable for the purpose of Hawkshaw, was attained, he heard the middle-watch called, and the port-tacks were brought more on board, which showed that the wind was veering upon the quarter; then all became still, and he heard only the ceaseless creaking of the timbers, the sound of the sea rushing past, the sway to and fro of the sleepers' hammocks, and his own half-suppressed breathing.

The idea of cutting the head-clew of Morley's hammock, and letting him fall head-foremost on the lower deck, occurred to Hawkshaw; and then he preferred the idea of relaxing the clew, so that it might seem to have given way, and the result of

such a fall in Morley's weak state would certainly kill him, while all the blame of the event would fall on the carpenter or sailmaker who slung the hammock.

But Hawkshaw's trembling fingers completely failed to undo the knot of the clew—one of those mysterious ones which sailors alone can tie and untie—so he was compelled to relinquish the idea.

He next approached softly, to assure himself that the four men were asleep. He opened the lantern, and passed the lighted candle twice across their faces, which were still wan, pale, and weird in aspect, after all they had so recently undergone.

He looked on Morley Ashton last, for it required some courage to do so steadily, while memories of the past and anticipations of the future were conflicting in his heart.

Morning was at hand now, the first sleep of the night was past, and the four were again in dreamland—chiefly, perhaps, our friend Morley—in that state which is between sleep and wakefulness.

Various shades of expression were passing over his handsome, pale, and gentle face. He muttered at times, too, and gave uneasy moans and starts, for thought, life, the soul, were still at work. Then his mouth wore a soft smile, as Ethel's image most likely came before him; anon, there was a knitted brow and stern compression of the lips, as some

fierce emotion followed; and next there came a gaunt aspect of despair, with some memory of the floating wreck, all evincing that, while he slept, the reflections of life were busy amid that uneasy slumber.

With bent brows, with haggard cheeks, with eyes that glared snakily in fear and hate, Cramply Hawkshaw gazed upon his victim; and as his deadly intent came gushing up in his heart—as his cruelty and wrath were screwed "to the sticking point," he quietly extinguished the candle, without perceiving that two eyes close by were watching him narrowly, with wonder and alarm.

There was no light now, save that of the stars, which struggled dimly and uncertainly through a couple of yolks in the deck overhead, and through the grating of the open hatchway.

Hawkshaw's heart panted as that of a chased tiger might do, and the old emotion he felt on that terrible night at Acton Chine—a lust of cruelty, of vengeance, and destruction—swelled or glowed within him!

A flame seemed to pass out of his eyes, while a thousand glaring orbs appeared to fill or pierce the obscurity about him; his breath became short and difficult, a deafness fell upon his ears, or there came around him an awful silence, as if the world itself stood still. Then his hands felt as if endued with

a giant's strength as they made a clutch at Morley's mouth and throat, for he had resolved to strangle or suffocate him.

But it was an attempt, and no more, for ere he could achieve his detestable purpose, he felt his hands seized, and one was grasped as if by the teeth of some wild animal.

The bite, with the terror and confusion it occasioned, so bewildered him, that the wild cry of agony which roused all on board the ship escaped his lips; he dealt a heavy blow in the dark at some one or something, he knew not what, and breaking from the strange assailant, fled, baffled, in consternation, to the after cabin.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### DREAD.

"What the devil is the matter?" asked Captain Phillips, as he hastily donned his pea-jacket, and addressed Hawkshaw, who was seated on the cabin locker, panting with excitement.

"Did you utter that dismal howl, Captain Hawkshaw?" added Dr. Heriot, impatiently; "speak, sir, have you lost your voice?"

"Very nearly, and my senses too," groaned the other, whose cup of shame and misery was well-nigh full now.

"What has happened?"

"Look at my hand!" said Hawkshaw, striving to gain time for thought—to rally his scattered wits for the coming *dénouement*—for an explanation, or a bold defiance.

"Well, what has happened?"

"It is almost bleeding—bitten."

"By what—by whom?" asked everyone at once

"A madman."

"Mad!" was exclaimed in wild tones by all.

"Yes," said Hawkshaw, through his clenched teeth, and with a glare in his eye, that seemed somewhat akin to insanity; "one of those fellows between-decks—one of those wretches we took off the raft (a curse upon them all!) has bitten me."

"But which of them?" asked Heriot, who had now completely attired himself.

"Oh, I don't know which, and I care not which," replied the wretched Hawkshaw, as he rubbed and blew his breath upon his aching digits.

"And he actually bit you?"

"Yes; have I not already said so?"

"What were you doing?"

"Doing—adjusting the clothes upon him," replied Hawkshaw, after a pause; "and look you, he has almost bitten my hand to the bone."

As he spoke he held up his right hand to the cabin lamp, and there certainly were the marks of a row of teeth distinctly visible, for Noah Gawthrop had been determined to give Morley's nocturnal assailant a stamp by which he would know him again.

"For all that I know, he may have half strangled one of his companions, in addition to this wild assault upon me," added the Texan captain, as a sudden thought occurred to him, for in his confusion he did not know how far he had assaulted Morley.

Heriot, a very sharp-witted and intelligent fellow, who, at his native university, had met men from all parts of the world, and had thus gained a considerable insight of human character, had been scrutinising Hawkshaw keenly, and something in his manner, or in the expression of his face, seemed to excite some vague suspicion—Heriot knew not exactly of what—in his mind.

"To me this appears like an impossibility," he began; "excuse me saying so, but what motive——"

"I know nothing of motives, Dr. Leslie Heriot," interrupted Hawkshaw, becoming furious and desperate; "but this I know, that I may be tempted to use my revolver with a vengeance, if I am molested again by anyone on board this ship; be assured of that."

At this sudden outburst, Heriot gave a smile of well-bred surprise, and glanced at the captain, who said:

"This is a most extraordinary and unaccountable affair, and must be instantly inquired into. I am sure that the poor fellows looked quiet enough when I saw them last. Steward—Joe, a lantern—quick! Come, doctor, Mr. Basset—we'll see to this."

"Oh, Leslie," cried Rose, "take care, take care!"

"Oh, papa—dear papa, you, at least, must not go," added Ethel, who had now put on her morning

wrapper, or dressing-gown, and appeared at the door of her little cabin.

"Pooh, pooh, Miss Basset, there is not the slightest cause for fear, my dear girl," said the captain, laughing, as Joe lit a ship-lantern.

"But the poor man's sufferings may have made him vicious—wild."

"I'll take care of your papa, ladies; and bite the fellow's head off, mayhap, if he bites him. Come, Captain Hawkshaw, and show us which of the four is the culprit, and then, if need be, we shall get the bilboes ready." *

"No, no, I cannot," replied Hawkshaw, with a sullen and hang-dog expression in his now white and livid face.

"What—you won't go?"

"No."

The captain looked at him with a smile of contempt.

"Lead the way, captain," said Mr. Scriven Basset, impatiently; for his ideas of legal prerogative and position were gradually becoming stronger as he drew near the scene of his future judgeship—the sunny Isle of France. "I am anxious to see the end of this singular affair."

* Iron shackles used on board ship to secure the feet of prisoners.

"Oh, most accursed fate!" murmured Hawkshaw, as he sank upon the stern locker. "All is over with me now!" he added, as Mr. Basset, the captain, Heriot, and others quitted the cabin, to go forward between decks, and then every minute that elapsed seemed at least an hour.

The cabin appeared to whirl round him like a great revolving cylinder; there was a confused hum of voices, that seemed to mingle with the rush of many waters, in his ear.

Again his former thoughts of suicide occurred to him; but his soul shrank within him at the idea of self-destruction. A loaded revolver was close by; he glanced at it with haggard and wistful eyes. One bullet would enable him to escape the coming shame, and by so doing, he would gain a triumph—a ghastly victory over them all.

But then he thought of a suicide's grave in the midnight sea; shot off a grating to leeward, without even a prayer, and shudderingly he withdrew his hand, and closing his eyes, muttered, with quivering lips:

"No, no—I cannot—I cannot."

At this moment a soft little hand was laid gently upon his, and looking up he beheld Ethel Basset.

Ignorant of all this man's secret life; of his crimes committed in wild and lawless lands; the wrong and cruelty of which he had been guilty to

herself and to Morley—she surveyed him with something of pity, and he gazed at her bewildered, and in silence, thinking that she never looked so lovely as at this terrible moment of his humiliation and suspense.

She wore a loose and ample morning wrapper, of white stuff, spotted with red; it was profusely frilled, and fitted closely round her delicate throat, and her tapered white arms came softly out from its wide falling sleeves. A white tasselled cord confined it at the waist, and she had no ornament about her, save Morley Ashton's ring.

Turned hastily off her face, and behind her white and handsome ears, her dark, glossy, and glorious hair fell in a long mass down her back, and she was knotting it up with her right hand (thus showing to perfection a smooth white arm and dimpled elbow), while her left, so soft and small, rested on the hand of Hawkshaw; the hand that only five minutes before had aimed a death-clutch at the throat of Morley Ashton.

She gazed kindly and inquiringly into his pale and agitated face, for his present wretched and guilty aspect astonished and perplexed her.

Her colour, always so delicate, was somewhat heightened beyond its usual roseleaf tint, by the late excitement, and, as we have said, Hawkshaw, with all his selfishness, with all his guilt and

bloodthirstiness, thought he never beheld her looking so lovely and so pure as at this, to him, most terrible time.

She was about to speak, when several footsteps were heard coming towards the great cabin, on which she retired hastily to her own, and shut the door.

"Oh, my God! they are coming to denounce me! Peril—disgrace—ruin, and no escape but death!" groaned Hawkshaw, covering his eyes with one hand, while the other fell, by chance—or was it fatality!—on the cold butt of the loaded revolver.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### UNMASKED.

The time spent by the captain and his companions in the place where the four castaways were located must have appeared interminable to the wretched Hawkshaw, as they remained there fully an hour, for much had to be inquired into, and much more related and explained.

Resolved to question, cross-question, sift, and refine, and all unconscious of the surprise that was awaiting him, Mr. Basset, with tolerable lawyer-like activity and importance, fussily followed jolly Captain Phillips, who had one hand stuffed into that pocket of his pea-jacket which held his revolver, and in the other hand he swung a ship's lantern.

To Mr. Basset's unpractised eye, the 'tween decks seemed rather a dreary den, to say the best of it. It was lower in height, or, to write more correctly, between beams, than the ship's cabin, and its furniture was exceedingly simple, consisting

only of a small breaker or gang-cask, and wooden drinking tot, set upon a sea-chest which was securely lashed to the bulkhead, while a railway rug and poncho wrapper lay thereby.

Then his eye caught four queer-looking long bags, that swung by clews and cleats from the beams longitudinally, and out of each of the aforesaid bags a human face was peering, with eyes expressive of inquiry and interest; but their features could not be discerned, for all was darkness, or nearly so, except where the light of the lantern fell.

"Hallo, my friends," said Captain Phillips, as he held his lantern up, and took a rapid survey of them all, "so you are awake, I see. What the deuce has been doing here, that we are all turned up in the night, or rather the middle of the morning watch, in this way, eh?"

"I don't understand what it is all about, sir," replied Tom Bartelot; "but a few minutes ago, in my sleep, I heard a terrible cry."

"Who was it that bit the gentleman?" asked Phillips, angrily.

"I did, your honour," replied Noah Gawthrop, looking over the edge of his hammock, and twitching his grizzled forelock.

"You—and you acknowledge it!" said the captain, turning towards him with angry surprise.

"Yes; and I hope as I have left the marks o' my blessed grinders in him, that's all."

"The fellow is mad," said Mr. Basset in an undertone.

"Do you think so?"

"Who else would talk thus?"

"Likely enough, sir," whispered Joe, the steward; "for I heard that old one this morning saying that he was tormented by a marine drummer, and shouting for all hands to reef topsails. He seemed to think himself on board a man-o'-war."

"A little crazed, perhaps, by recent suffering," suggested Mr. Basset. "A short sleep may soothe him; but a bite is a serious offence—a very serious offence."

"I ain't no more mad than your honour," said Noah, who had overheard their whispers, and looked up angrily; then he added, in a different tone, "But—is that you, Captain Phillips—lor' bless you, don't you mind o' me?"

"No, I do not," replied the captain, curtly.

"Not remember old Noah Gawthrop, as sailed for ten year and more with your brother, Captain Bill, and was wrecked with him in the Straits of Sunda?"

"Noah, it is, by Jupiter!" exclaimed Phillips, shaking the old seaman's hand with genuine warmth.

"This is, indeed, strange; 'tis long since we last met, Noah."

"Five years ago, if it is a day, since I came home from the West Ingees, and ran up the Mersey in a old sweating sugar-ship—her berths aft and bunks for'ard a swarming with bugs and cockroaches, a crew of Jamaiky darkies, and her lower rigging all alive with poll-parrots. I see you minds o' me, Captain Phillips—lor' bless me, in course you does, and know that I am no more mad than yourself, or my own good captain here, Mr. Thomas Bartelot, of the *Princess* as was, poor old craft."

"Oh, glad to see you, captain," said Phillips, shaking hands with Tom on this blunt introduction; "and glad too, that we came so opportunely to save you."

"Yes," resumed Noah, "I'm the man as saved your nevvy, Master Bill, when all hands went down in the Straits of Sunda, and I brought the child home with me, and gave him to yourself, as your honour very well knows. I was father and mother, dry nurse, and wet nurse, and everything to that 'ere boy, I was; and many a time I rope's-ended him, too, for putting plugs o' powder in my 'baccy pipe, or japanning the starn o' my trousers with new pitch. So you knows me well enough."

"Of course I do, Noah, my brave old salt."

"Of course you does. Ah, sir, your brother,

Captain Bill, would never have been lost, but in passing the straits during a south-east monsoon, he hugged the coast of Java, with his port tacks aboard, and so we went bump ashore on a blessed coral reef, where the sea made clean breaches over us. I made a grab at Master Bill, who was hauling his pet tom-cat by the tail out o' the wash to leeward, and then we all crouched under the weather-bulwarks, ready to cut away the masts, if necessary. But the sea saved us the trouble; for there came a regular snorer, that carried away the topmasts at the caps, breaking them sharp off like 'baccy pipes, the midship-house, boats, and everything went to leeward, while the ship parted, breaking her back fairly on the reef. I found myself in the dark, swimming away for the bare life, among sharks and long seaweed, with little Bill riding on my back like Sinbad's Old Man o' the Sea, and, top of all, the tom-cat, holding on to Bill with all his claws out. 'Hold on, you young warmint,' says I, and so he did, until we got ashore, and next day we were sent off by the Dutch in a queer jigamaree, with a lateen sail for'ard, and a dandy in her starn, to a British man-o'-war, that was bearing through the straits on a taut bowline, before the same monsoon that finished us off on the coral reef."

"But why did you bite the man?" asked Captain

Phillips, who had listened with some impatience, returning to the matter in hand.

"Because he is a pirate, if ever one broke biscuit!"

"Take care, Noah; he is one of our cabin passengers."

"I was a watching him, your honour, and I had queer suspicions that he meant foul play to one of us at least, and so I pretended to snooze, keeping watch with one eye open, though he did pass the light twice athwart my face. I saw him, your honour, though he doused the glim, and I could make out that he was going to strangle—to garotte, in true Californy style—my shipmate here, young Master Morley Ashton, who was asleep——"

"Mr. Morley Ashton!" exclaimed Mr. Basset, in an excited voice, as he hurried round to the other side of the hammock; "I should like to see the gentleman who is named so."

"Surely I should know that voice!" cried Morley, springing up in his hammock, and almost falling back within it, overwhelmed by astonishment on finding himself face to face with Mr. Basset—with the father of Ethel!

"What is this?—who is this? *You*, Morley Ashton, on board the *Hermione?*" exclaimed Mr. Basset, in a gust of genuine bewilderment, equalled only by that of Morley, who trembled with antici-

pation and astonishment, and who felt at his heart a sudden and clamorous joy. "*You* one of the four men taken from that melancholy wreck! How came it to be? Explain—tell me. Good heavens! how? Oh, my poor boy, Morley, we have long numbered you with the dead, and have mourned for you as such—none more, believe me, than my dearest girl."

"Where am I, sir?—what ship is this?" stammered Morley, as a new light began to break in upon him, while grasping Mr. Basset's hand, with one arm thrown caressingly round his neck. "Am I on board the *Hermione?* Has she picked us up —saved us from death?"

"Yes, sir; this is the *Hermione,* of London," said Captain Phillips, "too long delayed by contrary winds, and the loss of a mast near the Canaries."

"Oh, Morley Ashton," began Mr. Basset, "if you did but know——"

"Ashton?—Ashton?" interrupted the captain; "are you the gentleman who was to have sailed with us—who telegraphed for a cabin berth, and was not forthcoming when we dropped down the river?"

"I am the same, sir."

"What came of you? How did you disappear?"

"I was a victim to the foulest treachery and cowardice!"

"At the hands of whom?" asked Mr. Basset.

"Cramply Hawkshaw."

"What! he whom Gawthrop bit in the dark?"

"Bit, that I might know him again, your honour, for I warn't strong enough to grapple with him."

"And who, he says, attempted to strangle you in your sleep?" asked Dr. Heriot, coming forward.

"Hawkshaw here! on board with you — with *her!*" said Morley, in a faint voice, as certain undefinable, but terrible, suspicions arose in his mind.

"Yes; he is with us, a cabin passenger," replied Mr. Basset.

"Here! here! on board the *Hermione?*" continued Morley, almost vacantly, for his brain spun round.

"Yes, sir, in your place," said the captain.

"Great Heavens!"

"Your passage was taken out, your berth ready, the money paid; but you had slipped from your moorings somehow, so he went in your place. There is nothing very wonderful in that, is there?"

"He went with Ethel?" said Morley, in a tremulous and imploring voice to Mr. Basset.

"He came with *me*, as the son of my old friend, Tom Hawkshaw, of Lincoln's Inn, to push his fortune in the Mauritius," said Mr. Basset, hastily.

"And Ethel—Ethel?" continued Morley, in a broken voice, while his eyes filled with tears.

"Is well, though she has mourned for you deeply," replied Mr. Basset. "But pray be calm, my poor boy. How terribly agitated you are! Do not doubt her, or misunderstand me."

"And I shall see her—see her again?"

"Very soon—in ten minutes, perhaps."

"Oh, this is indeed happiness," sighed Morley, sinking back in his hammock. "Heaven is kind—most singularly merciful to me. But Hawkshaw—that wretch!" he added, starting up with new energy. "Oh, Ethel must shun, avoid and loathe him, for she knows not that he is an assassin!"

"How an assassin?"

"Or one who would be such."

"A regular-built pirate, and no mistake—a rascally Californy piccaroon!" added Noah, with sundry adjectives, which we feel the propriety of omitting.

"Aye, Mr. Basset, as Douglas Jerrold says, 'he is a scoundrel, who would whet a knife on his father's tombstone to kill his mother.' Oh, you know him not as I too surely, too truly, and too well know him, and all of which he is capable."

"These are severe and sweeping assertions. Explain this enigma—this most unaccountable affair."

"You remember, Mr. Basset, the night of my sudden disappearance from Laurel Lodge?"

"I shall never forget it. You had gone to Acton station, concerning a telegram from London."

"Concerning a berth in this very ship!"

"Yes."

"Returning alone, I met Cramply Hawkshaw, who entered into conversation with me, offered me a cigar, gradually lured me to the summit of the rocks above the Chine. There we sat listening to the village chimes in the old church tower, chatting, smoking, and enjoying the pleasant breeze from the Bristol Channel, till he, inspired by rivalry, jealousy, and hate, or by some fiendish combination of them all, at a moment when I was completely off my guard, by one furious blow struck me over the cliff into the Chine!"

"The Chine—oh, my God!" said Mr. Basset, in a voice that sank low with horror. "We came to look for you, Cramply and I, for he said that he had seen you walking there, and certainly we found marks of a struggle—the gravel dislodged, and the turf torn. You fell into the sea of course, but from that height! How—by what miracle did you escape?"

"A miracle, a narrow chance indeed! A turf-covered ledge received me, and there for many, many hours, more than a night and a day, I re-

mained sleepless, and scarcely daring to move, chilled less perhaps by the cold sea-breeze than by the horror of drowning if I rolled off the narrow shelf, of dying slowly by starvation and falling a prey to the sea-birds at last, till I was saved by my friend Captain Bartelot, whose vessel passed below me."

Excited by the memory of all he had undergone, Morley's voice faltered and grew weak as he spoke.

"Yes, sir," said Bartelot, striking in, "we chanced to see a human figure perched up among the gulls and cormorants, so we made a longer tack close in shore, and sent off a boat's crew, who climbed to the top of the rocks and hove him the end of a line. He was then towed up, and being quite insensible, Morrison, my mate, brought him on board. So, being outward bound—a storm having been signalled by Admiral Fitzroy, and beginning to break white in the offing, we had no time for backing and filling, or chopping about the rocky shore at Acton—I stood right down the Channel, intending to put him aboard the first suitable ship. We never overhauled any but foreigners, so we took him with us to Rio. He has often been well-nigh out of his mind sometimes, sir, about—I may be pardoned mentioning her name—Miss Basset; but he was in safe hands with me, sir, his old schoolfellow, Tom Bartelot."

"A strange and terrible story!" exclaimed Dr. Heriot.

"Poor Ethel, Morley," said Mr. Basset; "oh, what she has endured, and in silence, too!"

"I can know that well, by what I, too, endured. Dear, dear Ethel; and I shall see her——"

"So soon as she can be wisely informed of the great surprise, of the great joy, that await her. But that fellow, Hawkshaw—the fact of how I have been duped, deluded, and disgraced by the pretended friendship of such a man, falls like a thunderbolt upon me!" exclaimed good, easy Mr. Scriven Basset, with more energy than he was wont to exhibit, "and to think of my poor, sweet, and virtuous girls being contaminated by the society of such a man, and my secluded home being polluted by his presence, though sheltered there under the name of his good and worthy father! Damme! it's enough to make one suspicious of all mankind!"

Mr. Basset thrust one hand into his breast, and the other under the tails of his coat, and trod to and fro the whole length of the 'tween-decks, about twelve feet or so, swelling and reddening with just ire and indignation.

Bartelot, Morrison, and Gawthrop added many details corroborating the remarkable escape of Morley from Acton Chine, and descriptive of his

mental sufferings during the voyage to Rio de Janeiro; and by the time this interview, so full of stirring interest to all concerned in it, was over, and the captain and his companions had quitted the 'tween-decks, a new day had dawned, the sun was rising brightly from the sea, and throwing the shadow of the lofty *Hermione* far astern upon the gleaming waters to the westward.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE EXPULSION.

Hawkshaw's hand, as we have stated, fell unconsciously on the loaded revolver which lay by his side, but was instantly withdrawn.

He had not the courage to die by his own hand, in the fashion to which the old Romans were so partial in all their griefs and difficulties. He looked up with a half-haggard and half-bullying or defiant expression, as Captain Phillips, Mr. Quail, the doctor, and Mr. Basset entered the cabin.

The latter gave him a long, steady, and withering glance, and after knocking at the door of Ethel's little cabin or state-room, entered it hastily. Then the varying exclamations of astonishment and joy which were heard within it sounded as additional knells of disgrace—they might be those of death to Cramply Hawkshaw; and now, after surveying him long and sternly, Captain Phillips addressed him with great deliberation.

Hawkshaw found himself regarded with horror and aversion, but no ashes of fire were heaped upon

his miserable head, for the good, jolly captain was the only person who spoke.

"Sir, give me up that revolver."

Hawkshaw seemed to be stunned, and did not reply.

"The revolver, sir; do you hear me?"

"Why?"

"Never mind why or wherefore—they matter little now."

"I thought that we were all armed for a particular purpose."

Captain Phillips smiled bitterly.

"Yes," said he; "but you can be no longer trusted with arms on board my ship."

"Indeed!" said Hawkshaw, who knew not very well whether to cringe or bully, and pondered in his desperation.

"Yes; so surrender your arms. I'm an easy-going fellow, but one who won't be trifled with, for all that. Your revolver!"

Hawkshaw reluctantly handed Captain Phillips the loaded weapon.

"Thank you. Now, sir, I must inform you that we have had a long interview with the men in the 'tween-decks—those whom you so kindly undertook to watch, though such a duty was scarcely necessary—and after the revelations they have made, but chiefly after the account given of you by Mr. Morley

Ashton—you wince at the name, I see—you can no longer remain in the cabin of the *Hermione.*"

"Revelations! Did I not say that one—one at least—of these men was mad?"

"You shall not be sent forward," continued the captain, "among my crew, however congenial some of their spirits may be."

"What, then?" asked Hawkshaw, with undisguised alarm.

"You shall be secluded between decks till the end of the voyage, or be sent on shore at the first land we make, in the hope that we may never see you more."

"At the Cape of Good Hope?" asked Hawkshaw eagerly.

"I do not mean to touch at the Cape now, as we are so far to the southward of it," replied the captain, little foreseeing that this information was to have a fatal influence over all on board.

"Sir," replied Hawkshaw, gathering courage for a moment, "may I remind you that my passage to the Isle of France——"

"Is paid for, you would say?"

"Yes—*carambi!*"

"By Mr. Ashton's money. Ha! ha! I have known of a man being marooned on a rock in the Gulf of Florida—aye, or set adrift on a hencoop, or in a punt, with three biscuits and a bottle of water,

in the middle of the South Pacific—a poor devil who was far less criminal than you. I would to Heaven we had never seen you. No ship with such a thorough-bred rascal on board could hope for a prosperous voyage; and," continued the captain angrily, as his professional superstitions came to memory, "the fact of having you with us sufficiently accounts for the loss of our foremast after passing the Madeira Isles, for the mysterious loss of poor Manfredi, and the head winds we have uniformly encountered. Why, damme! we might as well have had a parson, or an undocked Tom cat aboard. Seclusion from among us is a punishment slight indeed for the crimes of which you have been guilty, but chiefly for your double and dastardly attempts upon the life of that young gentleman. You understand me, sir."

"I understand only, Captain Phillips, that your mind has been poisoned by a parcel of infamous falsehoods, which, on the first shore we make, I shall ram down the throat of him who uttered them with a pistol-bullet!"

"I hope the person referred to will not be such a confounded donkey as to exchange shots with a convicted assassin," replied Phillips.

"Assassin! I—I—I——"

Choking with sudden and uncontrollable passion, Hawkshaw sprang up from the locker, his blood-

shot eyes flashing with fire, his face pale and haggard, the veins of his temples swollen like whipcord, and his heart stung with the idea that Ethel in her little cabin could hear all that passed. His voice, husky and inarticulate, failed him, but his bearing was so threatening that Captain Phillips cocked the revolver pistol, and said, sternly :

"If you attempt to strike me, I will shoot you down like a gull. Quit the cabin this instant, and if you would keep your heels out of the bilboes, never let me find you aft the break of the quarter-deck."

Hawkshaw's hands were opened and clenched convulsively, as if his fingers twitched for an object to grapple with, and on which to vent the pent-up rage and shame that consumed him ; yet he found that he had no resource but to submit and retire, so he slowly left the cabin, but with an air of defiance which so ill became him, and so ill befitted his present predicament, that Phillips, the mate, and doctor, knew not whether to pity or laugh at him.

But the whole episode was a painful one, as they could not forget, at this climax of his humiliation, that this man, so summarily disgraced and cast forth from among them as an unclean thing, had been for so many months their companion and associate, their friend, and, to all appearance, their equal.

He repaired to the quarter-deck, and the cool

breeze that swept over the morning sea gratefully fanned his flushed face and throbbing brow. For a time he was blind with rage, and trod mechanically to and fro over the very cabin wherein Ethel and Rose (now filled with tumultuous joy by the strange tidings their father had brought them, were making a hurried toilette; till the appearance of Mr. Quail, who came to relieve the deck, to call the watch, to change the helmsman, and have the log hove, recalled the stern order of Captain Phillips, and, descending the break of the quarter-deck, he went sullenly forward—a proscribed man.

As he did so a mocking laugh met his ear.

It came from Pedro Barradas—who had just relieved the wheel, and who, being ignorant of the events that had transpired in the cabin, naturally supposed that Hawkshaw had, as usual, quitted the quarter-deck to avoid him.

For a moment this laugh stung him deeply; but many emotions were conflicting in his breast on this miserable morning, so that he scarcely felt anger at Barradas.

He had passed a sleepless night; but no sensation of weariness felt he, as he clambered into the fore-rigging, and sat there to consider his position—to watch the inmates of the cabin, and to avoid the crew, until he could conceal himself somewhere for the night.

Oh, how he longed for its friendly shadow and concealment—longed for it, while the beams of the morning sun gilded all the sea, and lit up the full swelling sails of the *Hermione*.

Feverish, and madly excited by the many emotions which had convulsed him since the moment in which he recognised the sleeping Morley Ashton, and more especially by the terrible and wicked thoughts of the past night, a longing for vengeance, or victory, rather—victory at any risk or price—filled his heart, till he nearly became mad, when thoughts of his rival's safety, restoration, and triumph were contrasted with his own exposure, expulsion, and disgrace.

The crew, among whom he dared not venture, would soon learn the whole story, and, knowing alike their reckless character and their nefarious projects, he already felt, by anticipation, the sharp stings of their fierce and brutal mockery, and the coming vengeance of those he had contemptuously ignored—the Barradas.

"Why did I not put a bullet through my head before old Phillips took away my pistol?" thought he. "Had I done so, by this time, perhaps, I would have been peacefully at rest below the surface of that blue and shining sea, instead of being perched up here, a moody wretch—a miserable and disappointed outcast."

Slowly, slowly the sunny morning wore on.

He heard Joe the steward's bell—once a welcome sound—rung for breakfast. The smoking ham and eggs, broiled chicken, tea and coffee, were borne from the steaming galley, aft to the cabin; he knew that the whole party, with their familiar faces, would be assembled at table as usual; and *others*, too, he shrewdly anticipated, would be there. Nor was he mistaken; for all the four castaways were so much better this morning, notwithstanding the recent disturbance, that they had quitted their hammocks, with the intention of coming on deck.

Perhaps they had already begun to feel that necessity which so soon impresses the sick or ailing on board of ship—the expediency of getting well as soon as possible (especially in such a ship as the *Hermione*); for, after a time, there is but little sympathy to spare for useless hands, either fore or aft; "an overstrained sense of *manliness* being the characteristic of seafaring men, or rather of life on board ship."

Apart from these considerations, and being bodily better, the knowledge that Ethel Basset was only separated from him by a few planks worked a miracle upon Morley Ashton.

Their sodden and surf-beaten rags had all been thrown overboard, so Morley was attired from the wardrobe of Dr. Heriot; the others were

supplied by the captain and Mr. Basset; and the appearance of Noah Gawthrop, when rigged out in a black swallow-tailed dress coat, belonging to the latter gentleman, with gilt buttons, and lappels of watered silk, an old crimson velvet waistcoat, an ample pair of dark tartan trowsers, and a sou'-wester of Mr. Quail's, was unique, and excited considerable speculation when he came on deck.

Forgetting his "landlubber-like toggery," with sailor-like instinct, Noah cast his eyes aloft, and critically surveyed all the rigging, and a smile, that puckered up the wrinkles of his old face, showed that the result of his scrutiny was satisfactory.

His remarkably ill-favoured visage was in no way improved by a patch of black sticking-plaster, with which Dr. Heriot had covered a cut on the bridge of his copper-coloured nose, the result of Hawkshaw's random blow in the matutinal row between decks.

Descending the break of the quarter-deck, Noah went forward, to get his breakfast with the crew, concerning whom the officers of the ship deemed it yet unwise to give him any warning.

He had considerably recovered his strength, and was eagerly welcomed by the seamen as he walked forward, and all gathered in a group about him in the break of the deck at the forecastle bunks, clamorous to hear his yarn about the loss of his ship

—where she was from, where bound to, what she was loaded with, and so forth—to hear all about himself, and, though recorded last, not the least exciting topic on which they wished enlightenment, was the cry that had come from between decks in the first hour of the morning watch.

Noah, seated on the barrel of the windlass, with a tin mug of scalding hot coffee, together with a slice of salt junk, and Quaco's "plum-duff," after denouncing the tea and arrowroot of Joe the steward, proceeded to give, in his own fashion, a rambling narrative of all the recent events in which he had borne a part.

The words which he uttered did not reach the ear of Hawkshaw, in his lofty perch; but suddenly all eyes were simultaneously cast aloft to where he sat near the sling of the foreyard, and Noah threateningly shook his clenched hand at him, while a roar of mocking laughter from the crew—that bitter laughter which he so long dreaded—filled his heart with rage and spite, that he nearly fell from his seat among his tormentors.

For a time, it seemed as if all these villainous upturned faces — the thick, African nose and sausage-like lips of Quaco, the glittering eyes and olive face of Zuares Barradas, the hideous squat form of Sharkey—a wretch with the life of Manfredi to atone for—Badger, with his sunken orbs

and great square jaw; Bolter, the unhealthy-looking Canadian, and all the rest—had been turned into mocking fiends, who would yet drive him to more desperate deeds, for he was now expelled, cast forth from among those with whom he had associated, without a prospect of return, or a hope of retrieving himself.

"Is not life altogether a long comedy," says some one, "with Fate for the stage-manager, and Passion, Inclination, Love, Hate, Revenge, Ambition, Avarice, by turns, in the prompter's box?"

Hawkshaw felt bitterly in his soul that his life had been a tragedy, in which the evil passions alone had played their parts by turns, and sometimes all together.

What would the last scene of that tragedy be?

"Hallo, foretop there!" cried Bill Badger, the tall, lantern-jawed, and odious Yankee. "Well, capting, I guess you're chawed up rayther. Thunder and lightning! come, ship with us in the little game we've got in hand. Jine us; you carn't do better now; and who knows but you may get your gal with the black shiners, after all?"

"*El cuchillo primero!* (My knife first)" said Zuares Barradas, touching the haft of his Albacete knife with ferocious significance.

Honest Noah opened his eyes very wide at these singular remarks, which were followed by another

roar of brutal laughter. On this, Hawkshaw, to get, if possible, beyond the reach of their conversation, trembling in every limb with rage, and with a strange blindness coming over his sight, as the old clamorous ferocity gathered in his soul, while feeling that the mocking words had not been uttered in vain—as they suggested certain ideas of probable vengeance on his exposers—proceeded to climb farther up the rigging, until he perched himself on the fore-crosstrees, his past experience having made him seaman enough to achieve this.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE MEETING.

How shall I describe the almost mute meeting between Ethel Basset and Morley Ashton? or shall I omit it altogether?

Instinctively, and with proper good taste, all in the cabin left them to themselves for a time; and even Rose—the saucy and impulsive Rose—who looked just as Morley had last seen her when playing at croquet in Acton Chase, with her pretty straw hat, her green zouave jacket, and tiny bronzed Balmoral boots, after rushing back to give him one kiss more, tripped upstairs on deck to join the doctor.

Mr. Basset had managed to break the matter—the vast secret—to Ethel skilfully and gently, by saying that the wrecked men could afford some information concerning Morley Ashton; that they knew where he was, that one had seen him lately, that he was alive and well, and so forth. Thus there was no scene, no screaming, no fainting for joy, and certainly no dying of that pleasant emotion. Such

a climax as the latter would have put the narrator of these events very much about indeed, for, our story being a true one, this little romantic portion of it dovetails with the rest—rather flatly, perhaps, because it is *true*.

For a time neither could exactly "realise" (to use a good Americanism) that they were reunited—Ethel, that Morley lived; Morley, that he should so suddenly find himself by the side of her whom he had been pursuing through the deep, reunited, and on board the *Hermione*, of London.

Again and again she fell upon his breast, repeating, in a voice that was almost breathless, but exquisitely touching:

"My darling—oh, my darling! can this be possible? Is this reality?"

Their poor hearts were too full to permit much to be said; nor would it be fair to them, or interesting to others, to rehearse all the little that they did say then. But how much had they to ask, to relate, to explain, and to deplore?

Morley had undergone so much, he had seen so many strange faces, and places too—Rio de Janeiro, with bay, mountains, and isles; Tristan d'Acunha, with its cliffs and mighty cone; Diego Alvarez, with its sea-elephants and fur seals; the Island of the Hermit, with its strange story of old Don Pedro de Barradas. He had encountered, moreover, so

many gales of wind, the wreck, with all its contingent woes and horrors, and so forth, that Laurel Lodge, and Ethel's face, figure, and whole image had seemed ten years off—at least, ten years appeared to have elapsed since their sudden separation.

To poor Ethel the intervening blank had seemed greater, for Morley had lived with hope, while she had none; and, to understand and conceive her utter bewilderment, we must bear in mind all she had undergone.

The sudden and unaccountable disappearance of Morley, and the supposed mode of his death (for it was only supposed, after all), had occasioned a more bitter sorrow, a keener and more protracted agony, than she could have endured by weeping at his deathbed, and afterwards knowing that he was at rest in a grave she could see, where she might plant flowers and drop her tears.

To have seen him borne forth from Laurel Lodge to Acton churchyard, amid all the real and paid-for pageantry of woe, would have been actual contentment, when contrasted with all she had suffered—doubt, uncertainty, despair!

Oh, she felt how deeply she must loathe Hawkshaw as the author of all their woe!

But now Morley was beside her, with her hands in his, looking lovingly into her loving eyes, drinking in her murmured words, sitting close, very close, to

her, so this reunion was as stunning and bewildering in its own way as their separation had been.

They were dearer to each other now by a thousand degrees than ever they were before, even after Morley's absence in Africa.

"It is good sometimes to be absent," says a graceful writer, truthfully; "better still to be dead, as regards our own imperfections and our equally imperfect friends. How they rise up and praise us for virtues we never possessed, and benignly pardon us for sins we never committed. How tender over our memories grow those who, living, worried our lives out, and might do so again, if we were alive, to-morrow."

They had none of those upbraiding thoughts to recall. Can it be reality, this happiness? was the uppermost idea in both their minds.

It was indeed Ethel whose head reclined upon his breast. She was changed since last they met at peaceful Laurel Lodge, among its rose-bowers, its giant laurels and stately sycamores; and yet how lovely she was—lovelier even now than then.

Long grieving had imparted a sweet Madonna-like sadness to the soft features; her cheeks were thin, and Morley's affectionate eye could see two *white hairs* amid the deep black braiding of the young girl's head; and he saw, too, that her broad, low brow, had an impress of care and sorrow—sorrow

for him, even now, when her dark eyes were flashing through their tears of joy.

It was indeed she, that beloved one, whose name he had so dotingly murmured to himself a thousand times, in the lonely watches of the night, when treading the ship's deck under the sparkling stars of the tropics, when the glorious planets of the Southern Cross—fabled by the devout mariners of the old Spanish Argosies to be "a brooch taken from the breast of the blessed *Madre de Dios*"—looked close and nigh, so close as to cast the ship's shadow on the rolling waters.

It was she whom he had imagined in those wild dreams by day, when the dreams of the waking are wilder by far than those of the sleeper.

She was beside him again, and they were hand in hand as of old, eye bent on eye, lip meeting lip. Ethel, his own Ethel—after all they had undergone—was beside him, so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that it seemed indeed a dream, or like a set scene, the plot or conception of a sensational romance or playwright—a trafficker in plots, contrivances, and *situations*.

It was so, and truth proved stronger than fiction after all!

And so, forgetful of others, forgetful assuredly of breakfast, till Joe in the steerage and Quaco in the galley were in despair about the eggs and coffee,

they would have sat till the sun that now shone through amber clouds so merrily ahead to the eastward had beamed his farewell rays in crimson through the stern-windows from the westward, had not Joe's bell, rung vigorously and impatiently for the third time, brought the whole party, including Mr. Foster, who had no sympathy whatever for lovers, and who felt famished, having had charge of the deck since 4 to 8 A.M.—the morning watch—and it was now half-past 10, alike by his appetite and the captain's chronometer.

All oblivious of the unhappy wretch who was "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy" aloft in the fore-crosstrees (where the swaying of the mast made the rolling of the ship seem so much greater than below) jovial indeed was the party which assembled at the sound of Joe's bell, and how curly-headed Joe's honest English face shone as he handed round coffee and tea, with whipped eggs for cream, or as he skipped about with hot water, and handed to the ladies preserves in tin cans, midshipmen's nuts and American biscuits in a silver bread-barge, a spotless white towel thrown over the sleeve of his round jacket the while, for Joe was something of a hybrid, half waiter and half seaman.

Under the cheering influence of Ethel's presence Morley's features soon became less haggard, and the keen, hawk-like expression of his dark eyes—an ex-

pression the result of suffering, danger, and of being long menaced by death—rapidly softened and passed away.

But with breakfast untasted, or feigning only to partake thereof, Ethel, pale and feverish, sat like one in a dream.

For this sudden restoration of Morley to life and to *her*, as it would seem from the bosom of the deep —from the greedy waves of that vast ocean which they had been traversing for more than three months —was more difficult of realisation than the horror of his disappearance and of his supposed dreadful death.

But she, and Rose too, seemed so forgetful of every one present, save Morley, that worthy young Dr. Leslie Heriot, F.R.C.S.E., actually envied him —envied the earlier intimacy he could claim with these two charming sisters, and felt almost jealous of the deep interest they evinced for our poor waif of the sea.

"And so you are indeed Miss Ethel Basset?" said Tom Bartelot, surveying the lovely girl with honest admiration and kindliness, when he was introduced to her.

"I am, sir," replied Ethel, smiling at his manner; "and a very old friend of Mr. Ashton's."

"I can scarcely regret the loss of my ship, the poor *Princess*," said Tom, gallantly, "or my own

suffering and misfortune, when I consider that all have been but the means to a happy end."

"Sir?" said Ethel, blushing a little, and looking down. "You mean——"

"That they have been the means of bringing you and my old chum and schoolfellow, Mr. Ashton, together again," continued Tom, blundering still more by his straightforward inferences.

"You are very kind, sir, in saying so," replied Ethel, as her colour came and went.

"That poor lad loves you as his very life," continued Tom, warming with his subject; "aye, far beyond it, for, when compared with you, he don't value it more than a bit of old rope-yarn! Many an hour has he walked the deck by my side, speaking of you, and praising you; and even when he didn't speak, by his silence and his sighs, I knew well enough that he was thinking all the deeper."

"My poor Morley!" said Ethel, who heard all this with joyous tears in her eyes.

As soon as they came on deck, Noah Gawthrop presented himself in his peculiar attire, the black dress-coat and crimson vest, and doffing his sou'-wester at the break of the quarter-deck, twitched his grizzled forelock, and beckoned Morley.

"Mr. Ashton," said he, in a stage whisper, "wot's this I hear for'ard among that rum lot in the fok'stle?"

"Really, Noah, I cannot say. What have you heard?"

"Why, sir, they says as your sweetheart, Miss Basset—she you were always raving about on the wreck—is aboard o' this here craft."

"Yes, Noah, she is," replied Morley, laughing.

"Is that dainty little 'un her?"

"Which?"

"She with the pork-pie hat, red stockings, and red cheeks, the jigamaree jacket, and crinnyline?" said Noah.

"No; the taller lady."

"Smite my timbers! A regular-built stunner! Wot a wonderful coinsiddins!—wot a cannondrum! as the player chaps say, when they go bouncing about to the fiddles and blue fire!"

"It is destiny, Noah."

"Jest wot they says too! Well, I have given over sweethearting now; but I have shared my pay with many o' that sort o' ware in my time. The best of 'em all—here's her photograff done in gunpowder by the cook's mate of the *Haurora*, as we were a working out of the harbour of Odessa. Many a mouthful of salt-water I've swallowed, and many a whistling Dick I've heard since that was done," said Noah, pointing to the tattooing visible on his breast when his check shirt was open. "But won't you introdooce me as an old shipmate?

'Mornin' marm, 'mornin','" he added, sweeping the deck with his sou'-wester, as Ethel came frankly forward; "I'm one o' them as took Mr. Ashton off the cliffs, and sailed with him to Rio Janairey, in South 'Meriky, in the old *Princess* as was."

"Indeed—oh, I am most happy to see you, sir," replied Ethel.

"Call me Noah, marm—Noah Gawthrop; I ain't used to being sir'd," said he, smoothing down his gray hair.

"Well, my good friend Noah," said Ethel, her eyes beaming, as she presented her little white hand to Gawthrop, who looked at his own hard palm, rubbed it well on his trousers as if to clean it, and then shook hers gently and kindly, not crushing it up as the tars do invariably in the play.

"Such a dear old thing it is!" said Rose, laughing, as she observed this interview.

"I've made a man of him for you, Miss Ethel—I knows your name, you see; one couldn't be long with Mr. Ashton, keeping watch and watch, without finding out that—but I have made a man of him for you, marm. He wasn't worth a tobacco-stopper at first; but I've taught him to becket a royal, and send it down, yard and all, in a stiff topgallant breeze, or a regular squall; to slush a mast from the truck-head downward; to haul out to leeward when on the yard-arm, and if that ain't summut

towards making him a good husband for you, and one as will, through the voyage of life, keep a firm hand on your rudder, and trim you nicely by the starn, I don't know wot is."

Noah's praises and rough congratulations were unintelligible to Ethel; but as they were calculated to excite laughter, and as some of his adjectives applicable to the "shark up aloft in the fore-cross-trees" were neither elegant nor euphonious, he was speedily sent forward by Tom Bartelot.

Rose, perceiving that Ethel was deadly pale, for the events of the morning proved rather too much for her strength, took her below for a little time, by Mr. Basset's suggestion. Morley affectionately and tenderly handed her down the companion-stair—not a glance of his the while, not an emotion or movement being unnoticed by Hawkshaw, who, like a hawk, or rather like a tree-tiger robbed of his prey, was still perched alone in the fore-crosstrees.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE CORPSE-LICHT.

As Morley turned away from the companion, he was confronted by his old friend Morrison, the mate of the defunct *Princess*. The Scotsman's honest face was radiant with pleasure, and grasping Morley's hand, he congratulated him warmly on the sudden change that a few hours had made in all his plans and prospects.

"No use in thinking of Tasmania now, or calculating the chances of finding a ship for the Isle of France, and all that, Mr. Ashton, eh?" said Morrison, laughing.

"Thank Heaven, no," said Morley, as they descended the break of the quarter-deck, and went to windward, near the main-rigging; "so great has been the alteration in all our affairs, that I can scarcely believe I was the poor doomed wretch of a few hours ago. Another night on that wreck would have seen us all dead men, Morrison."

Then Morley thought how strange it would have been if the ship, with Ethel on board, had passed

the wreck, on board of which he was lying dead, and there was no voice to inform them of his fate, and the terrible mystery involving it.

"And you will be getting married now, Mr. Ashton," said Morrison, after a pause.

"Married!" repeated Morley, with astonishment; "where—where—here upon the open sea?"

"No; but when we are all landed at the Mauritius, where I shall have to look out for another ship, and, perhaps, may have to work my way home before the mast, for home to Scotland I must get somehow; and before the mast——"

"You shall never go in that fashion, Morrison, if I can help it; but as for my being married to Miss Basset"—Morley felt his cheek flush and his heart flutter at the thought—"that is an event which is somewhat distant yet, and must be so, till fortune—the old story—smiles on me."

"That I am sorry to hear," replied the Scotsman; "what says poor Robbie Burns, in one of the sweetest of his songs?—

> "'Oh, why should Fate sic pleasure have,
> Life's dearest bonds untwining?
> And why sae sweet a flower as love
> Depend on fortune's shining?'

Well, Mr. Ashton, hap what may, though our path in life and our homes will aye be far apart, I'll never forget the days we have spent together; and miser-

able enough some of them have been latterly," continued Morrison, who was a warm-hearted and impulsive fellow, and whose keen gray eyes grew moist as he spoke; "and so, as I said, hap what may, you shall always have the best wishes of poor Bill Morrison, though a sailor has seldom more to give, unless it be a quid from his tobacco-box, or a share of his grog on pay-day."

"Fortune may go and hang herself," said Morley; "she has never favoured me till now."

"Perhaps she thought such a good-looking fellow might be left to shift for himself," replied Morrison, laughing. "I once heard the song I have just quoted sung by a girl, whose story was a very strange one. She was separated from her lover by adverse circumstances, and though they never met again in life, they repose now in the same grave."

"Another of your melancholy yarns, Bill?"

"Well, it isn't lively. Shall I tell it to you?"

"Yes, please. Miss Basset is still below."

"I had entered on board the *Clyde*, a Greenock ship bound for Tasmania. I was but a third mate then, and that post, you know, is only a trifle better than being before the mast. She had several emigrants, and among them was a man named Udny, with his wife and a daughter whom I heard them call Hester.

"There was with them a good-looking young

fellow from the shore, a shepherd apparently, for he wore a checked tweed suit with a Border plaid, and a broad blue bonnet. He was evidently not going the voyage; but he continued to hover about Hester Udny with a sad and dreary expression of face, and I could see that the girl's eyes were red and sore with weeping.

"She was a bonnie, fair-haired Scotch lassie. That the pair were lovers we could all see, and we knew that they were about to be separated for ever, perhaps, as her parents, poor and expatriated cotters, were going to find a new home in Tasmania. The lad was poorer still, and had to remain behind in the old country.

"My heart bled for them, and from time to time I could not restrain the inclination to observe them, as they sat, hand in hand, oblivious of the noisy throng about them, and the coarse jests of the cargo-puddlers, dock-porters, and especially of the sailors, each of whom volunteered to replace her sweetheart on the voyage.

"Twilight came on as we began to cast off the warps, and were towed down the river by a tug-steamer, so quickly, that the lights of Greenock soon twinkled out amid the haze and smoke astern.

"The sun had set, but the red flush of the departed day lingered brightly beyond the dark peaks of the Argyleshire mountains that look down on the

Gairloch, the Holy Loch, so solemn and still, and many another place that I can see in memory yet, and that I often saw in dreams when we were floating on the wreck.

"The lad was to go back, among a few other shore people, in the tug-steamer. I heard the girl sobbing as if her heart would break when she heard the order given for them to quit the ship, as we were preparing to cast off the towline and loosening the topsails out of the bunt. I was sent forward with a gang to cat and fish the best bower anchor, and hoist it over the bows on board. When again I went aft, sail had been made on the ship; the tug-steamer had disappeared in the obscurity astern, and the sad girl was sitting alone, with her eyes fixed on the lights that glistened in the castle of Dumbarton.

"We had been for some days at sea before the girl came on deck. She looked pale, wan, and thin—worn almost to a shadow with mental suffering and sea-sickness; and the close atmosphere of a crowded steerage was as poison to one accustomed from infancy to the green lanes and wooded hills of Cydesdale. All pitied her forlorn appearance, and even the roughest sailor did not jest with her now.

"One evening she remained longer on deck than usual. I had the wheel; the ship was running before the wind with topgallant-sails, lower and

topmast stun'sails set. The air was mild and the stars shone clearly and brightly amid amber to the westward and the blue in the zenith.

"With her head muffled in a plaid, Hester Udny was seated near me; but I had my attention mostly fixed upon the binnacle. There was silence fore and aft, and silence on the sea, when I heard the poor lassie singing to herself in a sweet, low voice, that song of Burns', and the notes became full of pathos at the lines:

> "'Oh why should Fate sic pleasure have,
> Life's dearest bonds untwining?
> And why sae sweet a flower as love
> Depend on fortune's shining?'

"Suddenly she uttered a cry, and springing to me, grasped my arm. Her plaid or shawl had fallen back, and her fine golden-coloured hair was all in disorder; her eyes, which were a deep blue, were unnaturally bright and dilated, and their gaze was fixed wildly upon a part of the deck just aft the mainmast.

"'Sailor—sailor; oh, man, man, do you see *that?*' she asked, in tones of terror.

"'What?' said I.

"'A flame rising up through the deck, and growing higher every moment.'

"'Flame!' I repeated; 'there is no flame.'

"'Fire—it is *not* fire; it is the figure of a man—

head, shoulders, arms, and hands—flame, all flame, pale blue, wavering, and indistinct!'

"'Nonsense, lassie, you are demented,' said I.

"'And you don't see it, sailor—you don't see it?' she continued, wildly.

"'No, my poor lassie,' said I; 'your eyesight must deceive you.'

"'Oh, heaven!' she shrieked, in a voice that brought all who were below tumbling up the hatches as if the ship were going down. 'Can I be going mad? It is like the figure of my Willie!'

"She fell senseless on the deck, and was carried below.

"This alleged apparition caused great speculation, and, as we had several emigrants from the Western Highlands on board, no small degree of terror, so that part of the deck abaft the mainmast was always watched narrowly and suspiciously; but neither flame nor figure saw we, though Hester afterwards asserted that one of the watch, who heard her cry, and hastened to assist her, passed *through* the figure, which wavered as he did so, but again resumed its luminous form.

"A fortnight elapsed before she was brought on deck again; and I must own to being shocked at the change in her appearance. Her keen blue eyes seemed unnaturally large and sunken, with dark rings round them, and her poor, thin, transparent

hands trembled as she muffled her plaid or shawl over her head, when the watch on deck hastened to make a comfortable seat of old sails for her under the lee of the bulwark.

"Fearing a repetition of what had occurred before, her father and mother insisted on taking her below when twilight approached; but, urged by some undefinable feeling or emotion, she lingered longer than she should have done.

"We were now in latitudes where the sun sets quickly, the dusk comes on as rapidly, and heavily falls the dew.

"Hester Udny, pale as a spectre, was soon observed to fix her eyes upon that portion of the deck abaft the mainmast where she had seen the apparition, with a wild, but steady and deliberate gaze, as if fascinated; and then, in faint and tremulous accents, she declared that the figure of flame was again visible, pale and luminous, sometimes turning from amber to blue, and becoming hazy; that beyond it, or through it, she could see the line of the ship's bulwark, and the shrouds of the mainmast, as if it was transparent.

"To undeceive her, the captain passed and repassed the place, going each time, as she said, amid her cries, completely through the figure, unsinged, unhurt, and all unconscious that he was doing so.

"She swooned, and was carried below again.

"What added greatly to the strangeness of this phenomenon was the circumstance that some of the crew, when standing over the spot where the spectre was alleged to appear, were seized with giddiness, strange qualms, and even sickness, alike by day or night, and were ridiculed by those of a less nervous temperament, who never felt any such sensations, as 'green-horns' and 'fanciful lubbers.'

"Hester Udny never came on deck again—alive, at least.

"She remained in bed during the remainder of our voyage, evidently in a rapid decline, and on the day when we made the south-west cape of Van Diemen's Land—a high, bold, and rocky promontory—she expired.

"We were soon within six miles of the land, and her parents begged so hard that they might be permitted to bury the poor girl ashore, that our skipper acceded to their request. Assisted by the sailmaker, they wrapped her up in blankets, and her body was placed on a grating along the thwarts of the long-boat amidships, with a union-jack spread over it. No other pall had we, nor could we have found a better for a heart so true as that poor lassie once possessed; and there she lay when we entered the mouth of the Derwent river, and worked against a head wind up D'Entrecasteaux's Channel.

"I see that I am tiring you, Morley, with this

long yarn; but Miss Basset is still below, and the strangest part is yet to come.

"We got aground on the western side of the channel, but ran an anchor out, manned the capstan, and hove the ship off. At half-past nine that night we came to anchor in thirty-fathom water, off Hobart Town, fired a gun, and furled our canvas, with the ensign at our gaff-peak half hoisted, to show that death had boarded us before the harpies of the custom-house.

"By daybreak next day I was ordered with a gang to prepare for breaking bulk, and proceeded to unship the main-hatch prior to starting the cargo.

"On removing a bale or two, and a few casks, how great was our horror to find, just abaft the main-mast, and under that portion of the deck where Hester Udny had twice seen the figure of flame—a figure perhaps always there, though invisible to us—the skeleton of a man, standing quite erect against the after-bulkhead!

"He was dressed in a gray tweed suit, with a blue bonnet, surmounted by a red tuft, and a checked Border plaid was over his right shoulder. All the flesh had dried upon his bones, so that his clothes hung loosely on him. A few blackened shillings, and a mouldy letter or two, were found in his pockets, so we at once supposed that, being unable to pay his passage, the poor fellow had secreted himself in

the hold, little knowing how the cargo would be screwed and stowed up to the beams, and how hermetically the hatches would be closed by battens, tarpaulins, and iron bands; and thus he had perished miserably, unheard, unseen, and unknown—perished of suffocation, and remained there until he dried into a veritable white mummy.

"Our commiseration was greatly increased when we found that the mouldy green letters were written by Hester Udny, and in the poor stowaway her parents recognised her lover, Willie, the lad whom we had all seen hovering about her on the night we hauled out from Greenock to drop down the Clyde.

"They were buried ashore, these two ill-starred and unfortunate lovers, in the burying-ground of the big brick church of Hobart Town, and the whole ship's company attended the funeral. Jack's a rough fellow, Mr. Ashton, but I can assure you that, as we lowered their two plain black coffins into their deep grave, side by side, with a few fathoms of line, there was not a dry eye among us.

"And some of the roughest patted the old father on the back, as he stood dreamily at the head of his daughter's grave, in that far foreign land—sae far frae the Hills o' Campsie, and wondering if it could a' be true, and that she was lying *there*, while tears streamed down his cheeks, and his

white hair waved i' the wind under his auld blue bonnet."

It was a peculiarity of Morrison's, that whenever he became interested, or perhaps more perfectly natural, he always slid into his old Scottish vernacular.

"This is a sad story, Morrison; but the luminous figure which the girl saw—how the deuce do you account for that? She was out of her mind, of course?"

"Out of her mind! not at all!" responded the philosophical Scot; "she was of a delicate temperament, and in a highly nervous and sensitive state, thus she may or must have seen that which was invisible to us of a rougher texture—the gaseous light proceeding from the fermentation, putrescence, and decay of the body beneath the deck—in short, that which we call in Scotland a corpse-licht." *

But now to return to our own story.

A long consultation ensued concerning what was to be done with Cramply Hawkshaw, and the conclusion come to was simply that he should be kept in the seclusion, or "Coventry," enjoined by Captain Phillips, till the vessel reached the Isle of France; and Morley gave a species of parole, that he would

* Concerning such appearances, see Baron von Reichenbach's work on the "Dynambics of Magnetism, Electricity," &c. &c., with notes thereto, by Dr. John Ashburner.

studiously avoid, nor seek in any way to punish him for the outrage he had formerly committed, or that which he had latterly attempted.

So the first day of Morley's re-union with his friends passed merrily and happily away.

In honour of the event, Mr. Basset had a case containing some of his favourite Marcobrunner and sparkling hock hoisted out of the store-room, and in the cabin that night the wine went round so freely, that Captain Phillips's merry eyes shone in his head, Tom Bartelot came out in his favourite drinking song, and poor Mr. Quail, all unused to such beverages, when he went up to relieve the deck, at eight bells, saw two wheels and two steersmen, and the *Hermione*, tearing through the sea with six masts, and at least seven-and-twenty crossyards upon her.

As it came on to blow about midnight, a reef was taken in the topsails, and forgetting the evil projects broached by his crew on this occasion Captain Phillips gave a double allowance of grog to the watch, with pots of hot coffee to those who preferred them—kindness thrown away, as it proved in the sequel.

Now that our hero and heroine are safely re-united on board the very ship in which they were originally to have sailed together, the reader who is versed in novel-lore may suppose that nothing remains but for

Mr. Basset to bestow his paternal benediction on them in the true fashion of the "heavy father," and for Hawkshaw, either at once to be forgiven, on promising to be a good boy for the future, or to receive condign punishment.

But, unfortunately, our story is not fictitious, so it ends not here.

Morley has escaped death, and is again seated by the side of Ethel Basset, gazing into her quiet, deep, and loving eyes as if he could do so for ever, and never, never weary, of course; but storms as yet unthought of, unheard and unseen, are ahead.

The good ship *Hermione* lies bravely to her course, now east and by north; but she carries with her the growing elements of discord, crime, and misery.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### OUT OF SCYLLA AND INTO CHARYBDIS.

The little excitement consequent on discovering the piece of wreck, the rescue of those who were on it, and the speculation caused by the recent uproar in the night, and the exclusion of Hawkshaw from the cabin, soon passed over among the crew, who now began to consider that there were on board four more men to feed, to win over to the project of Pedro Barradas—a process which seemed doubtful —or to be got rid of, if the attempt to win them failed.

The only one with whom they supposed there was a chance of success was Noah Gawthrop, or "Old Sticking-plaster," as they named him, from the patch on his nose; and hence Badger, and one or two others, were deputed to sound him on the subject; but the chief defect in their plans arose from a doubt of the ship's whereabouts, and whether Captain Phillips would haul up for Table Bay.

Some were disposed to enlist Hawkshaw in their daring scheme, or at least to sound him, too, as a

little homicide in no way injured a man in their estimation; while the misery of Hawkshaw's position on board might have made him ready to embrace any proposition that came short of jumping into the sea.

Neglected, to all appearance forgotten—for who could sympathise with an assassin?—he had passed the whole of the first day without food in the fore-rigging. Towards evening Quaco brought him a pot of hot coffee from the galley, which was a grateful beverage to his parched throat, and in the twilight he came down stiff, sore, and benumbed, and walked about amidships.

There, Joe, the steward, came to say, that when he "wished to go below, his traps and berth were 'tween decks, where he would have full leisure to employ his mind in squaring the circle."

At this jibe he clenched his hands to chastise Joe; but felt too much crushed to make even the attempt, and turned in silence away,

On the second or third day after his expulsion from the cabin, when retiring to his place between decks—the same quarter in which the four hammocks had been hung—he encountered Miss Basset, and passed her so closely that he felt her skirts brush against him.

Though dark and soft, Ethel's eyes were at times keen and piercing, for they possessed a wonderful

power and beauty of expression—a beauty one may meet with perhaps but once in a lifetime. As she passed Hawkshaw, she drew aside her skirt, as if to avoid contact, and hastily cast down her eyes, as if loath to humiliate him, while her breast heaved, and her cheek grew painfully pale; but in her eyes, as they flashed beneath their downcast lashes, Hawkshaw could see the horror, the loathing, and even terror with which his presence inspired her.

More humbled than ever by this, though he could have expected nothing else, he slunk to his place of penance—his prison he deemed it, as he seldom left it—and casting himself upon the sea-chest, groaned aloud in rage, in bitterness, and agony of spirit.

His food was brought to him by Quaco, the black cook; but his appetite was gone, so each meal was taken away almost untasted.

"By golly, Massa Hawkshaw, you had better eat and keep strong," said Quaco, with a grin on his shining face.

"Why—what the devil is it to you whether I eat or not, you black thief?" asked Hawkshaw, savagely.

"Kindness, on'y kindness, massa—yaas, yaas," he replied, grinning more broadly than ever.

"I want none, even from you."

"Dat be bad—dat is; but, golly! don't you know what Pedro Barradas am up to?"

"No."

"He's agoin' to be massa capting."

"What?"

"He's agoin' to trim de ship by de starn, he is. Jolly, ain't it! But there will be no loblolly boys allowed to skulk 'tween decks arter dat—by golly! no," and, grinning away like an ogre, with his yellow eyeballs gleaming, his white teeth and angular cheek-bones shining, Quaco retired with the greasy wooden mess-kid on which he had brought Hawkshaw some hot lobscouse.

Quaco's words made his heart beat faster, and set him to think deeply, and with indescribable agitation.

The proposed seizure of the ship was again upon the *tapis*.

Should he acquaint Captain Phillips of it; but perhaps he knew of it already more fully, and was quite prepared.

By his silence, Ethel might be destroyed; by speaking in time, she might be saved; but only saved for Morley Ashton. Damning thought! The first impulse made him start to his feet, to summon Joe; the second made him sink back sullenly on the sea-chest again.

To join those in the cabin was but to serve

Morley Ashton and those who loathed him; to league with the mutineers, whom he dreaded, was but to sink deeper in disgrace and more hopelessly into crime.

On shore, he would have gladly fled from them all; but in that floating prison, the *Hermione*, he had but one resource left—to join the crew—if he would save his own life. He felt himself helplessly at the mercy of the Barradas; and, by joining them in the scuffle or conflict that must precede the capture of the ship, he might find a fair means of putting a period to Morley Ashton's existence, if some one else did not anticipate him. Morley he hated with a tiger-like emotion—a mingled dread and aversion.

For himself, he might yet have Ethel in his power. Some very daring, dark, and incoherent thoughts flashed through his mind. He might have her, in spite of Fate and Fortune, too; and afterwards, when once on shore, she would feel herself compelled to link her future life with his.

The shore—any shore—oh, how he longed for it.

He felt himself constrained to avoid the deck, save in the night, and thus to spend the entire day below.

Secluded there like a felon, avoided like a reptile, he asked himself, was he really the man of yesterday or the day before?—the same Cramply Hawk-

shaw who had sat at table with the Bassets and officers of the ship, enjoying their society and companionship, as an equal and friend?

Was the past, indeed, gone for ever? He was on board the same ship (how he loathed and cursed every rope in her rigging, every plank in her hull); he still heard the same daily sounds on deck, the same voices from time to time, and more than once he had heard Rose Basset's ringing laugh; there was the same rush of water alongside; the same moaning of the wind aloft; the same bell clanging the half hours; all seemed unchanged but he alone!

He could not bring back the perfect idea of himself, or what he was.

How bitterly he felt, how impatiently he spurned the restraint imposed upon him in the circumscribed space of the ship, and longed for land, any land, as we have said—Africa, even Dahomey, were welcome—that he might escape and hide himself from all; but chiefly from the Bassets, before whom he had so successfully glozed over his secret life and real character by a network of lies, crimes, and cunning—a network which Morley's sudden appearance had torn aside.

Right well he knew the light in which all viewed him now—a swindler, impostor, and worse.

Unless it lingered in the emotions of envy and

wounded self-esteem, his selfish passion for Ethel had quite evaporated, amid his shame and humiliation, or was almost merged in his vengeful hate of Morley—a sentiment rendered all the deeper by the wrongs already attempted without success.

So there, between decks, in the scene of his last attempted crime, he sat and brooded darkly on the past, or scheming out the future; a trial he did not dread, even if the vessel reached the Isle of France, and Morley Ashton urged it by an appeal to the civil authorities.

There would be but his bare accusation, without a single witness to support it, so a bare denial was all that was necessary, for well he knew that no human eye had seen that encounter by the verge of Acton Chine, in England.

Then there was a memory of Ethel's loathing attitude and averted glance lingering like a barbed arrow in his heart.

"Yes," said he, aloud, "I feel the time at hand when I may requite hate with deeper hate."

"*Buenos noches, mi hombre de nada,*" ("Good night, my rascal, or man of nothing") said a voice in his ear, and, starting from his reverie, he found himself confronted by the tall and muscular figure of Pedro Barradas.

It was night now, and the candle flickered dimly in the lantern of perforated tin, which swung

from a beam above, and its downward rays fell on the dark face and picturesque figure of the South American seaman, with his crisp locks and coal-black beard, his tawny ears, in each of which a silver ring was glittering, his loose shirt of dark blue woollen, open at his breast, on which a cross was tattooed, and girt at the waist by a Spanish scarlet sash, in which his Albacete knife was stuck.

A fierce and malicious grin pervaded his sombre features—such a grin as one might imagine in the face of a laughing fiend—as he surveyed the crushed and miserable Hawkshaw, who, being quite unarmed, was not without emotions of terror and alarm.

"You scurvy *ladrone*," said Pedro, grinding his strong white teeth, "when I remember that evening in the Barranca Secca, between Xalappa and the Puebla de Perote, and the use you made of your lasso, I wonder what devil prevents me from putting my knife into you."

Hawkshaw started back, and glanced hopelessly about for a weapon. Pedro laughed hoarsely; but his merriment did not allay the alarm of Hawkshaw, who knew that such men as he could jest with their victim while the knife was piercing his heart.

"So the air of the cabin has not agreed with you, eh? Well, I daresay you have been worse lodged

and fixed in Texas, where some of the huts are no better than a *retranche*; but I think you had better come forward and hitch in with us."

Hawkshaw still glanced uneasily about him.

"Demonio! why don't you speak, and be d——d to you?" roared Pedro, losing his patience, which was never at any time a very extensive commodity. "Have you lost your lying tongue as well as your wits?"

"No, Pedro Barradas, I have lost neither."

"How long it is since I have heard my name on your tongue, *companero*; not since we were diggers together on the banks of the Feather River. Speak out—*presto!*"

"What do you want with me, or require of me?"

"I am exceedingly anxious to ascertain something of which the crew have been kept in ignorance for some time past."

"Something—from me?" asked Hawkshaw, with surprise.

"Yes."

"You mean the progress and working of the vessel?"

"Precisely so; her whereabouts upon the sea."

"How should I know?"

"How you should or should not is nothing to me; but, *presto*, no equivocation," said Pedro, placing his right hand on the haft of his knife.

"Then, for the soul of me, I cannot tell you," replied Hawkshaw, with great earnestness.

"You must have heard it mentioned, casually or otherwise, in the cabin. The latitude and longitude, I mean."

"If so, may I die if I can remember them now."

Pedro's eyes began to gleam dangerously; but he changed his tactics, and asked:

"What does the captain mean to do with you?"

"Do with me?" stammered Hawkshaw.

"Yes, *santos!* I spoke plain enough."

"But I do not understand," said Hawkshaw, evasively.

"Must I speak more plainly?"

"If you please."

"How cursedly polite we are," sneered Pedro. "Well, most illustrious Senor Caballero, does he mean to maroon you, or hang you?"

"Neither; and in either case it is not probable he would consult you."

"Well, *companero*, perhaps he will land you at El Cabo de Bueno Esparanza?" said Pedro, with more suavity.

"We are not to touch at the Cape," was the unwary reply.

"Not to touch at the Cape?" repeated Pedro, so loudly that he might have been heard in the cabin.

"No."

"Why."

"Simply because I have been given to understand that we are past it."

"*Por vida del demonio!* Past it, say you?" exclaimed Pedro, as if communing with himself.

"One thing, at least, is certain. We are not, I am sorry to say, to touch at the Cape."

And who told you this?"

"The captain himself."

Pedro uttered a tremendous Spanish oath, expressive of extreme astonishment and satisfaction.

"So—so this cunning old Englander has been keeping us all in the dark as to where we are?"

"Exactly."

"But wherefore?"

"That I cannot say," said Hawkshaw, evasively.

"*Morte de Dios!* does he suspect?—does he smell at a rat!" exclaimed the Spaniard, with a sudden rage; but Hawkshaw remained silent. "We must be somewhere off the coast of La Tierra de Natal, and if so, by the ship's steering to-day, the mouth of the Mozambique Channel should be upon our weather-bow; yet how far distant, none but the captain and his mates can say," continued Pedro, as if in communion with himself; but he was wrong in his supposition, for the ship, at the time he spoke, was about a hundred miles to the southward

of Algoa Bay, which opens between Cape Recife and Cape Padrone in southern Africa.

"Listen to me," said Pedro, suddenly, with a savage glare in his black eyes, a low and husky tone in his deep, sonorous voice, his right hand on the haft of his knife, and his left planted on Hawkshaw's shoulder with the grasp of a vice. "We mean to take this ship, and run her on our own account; but as four new hands have been added to the officers, will you join us? It is a fair offer—your only chance of vengeance, too: for, ashore, you will not be worth a rotten castano."

"Well—well—I am with you," said Hawkshaw, in a low and husky voice.

"*Bueno!* we should fight for the ship whether you were with us or not. Your hand on it, mate! But first, what terms do you want?"

"My life, in the first place, to be respected by all, and to be set ashore on the first land we see, as I am not a seaman."

"The *first* land may be a sea-weedy rock, at the mouth of the Mozambique," said Pedro, with a diabolical grin, as it suggested a new idea of cruelty. "Your share of plunder?"

"I seek no plunder. I seek but revenge and liberty."

"Your hand, then; and let us forget all about the Barranca Secca."

Pedro grasped in his strong, hard hand the shrinking fingers of Hawkshaw, thinking the while:

"This ship once ours, I shall soon make short work of it with *you*, my fine fellow!" Grinding his teeth, he added aloud, "If you betray us, woe to you."

"I am pledged," said Hawkshaw, in a voice like a groan.

"The cargo is valuable, so we shall go in for a good stroke of business together."

"When—when do you make the attempt?"

"To-morrow night, or the next, at latest."

"I shall be ready."

"Then to-morrow evening at four bells, in the second dog-watch, be in the forecastle bunks, and you will learn all. Till then, *companero*, be silent, and *remember!*"

With another significant touch of his knife-handle, Pedro retired, leaving Hawkshaw in a very unenviable state of mind. As a bold and reckless ruffian, the Spanish American valued him little as an ally; but the chief object of his visit had been attained—information that the ship, instead of being hauled up for Table Bay, was *past* it.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### FOUR BELLS IN THE DOG-WATCH.

All the next day there blew a gale, and Captain Phillips, anxious to make the most of it, as the wind was fair, squared his yards, with all that he dared to spread upon them. So sharp was the aforesaid gale, that on a taut bowline, no vessel could have shown more than a single sail, perhaps; but the *Hermione* tore on before the hurrying blast, with her fore and main courses bellying out before it, and her three topsails set with a single reef in each.

Ere long, Captain Phillips was heard to shout:

"Away aloft, men—shake the reefs out of the topsails—masthead the yards."

Cheerfully enough the watch sprang aloft and obeyed the order. And now the foam flew in white sheets over her sharp bows, rolling aft to the break of the quarter-deck, from whence it surged forward again, and gurgled through the scuppers on each side alternately.

Astern a tremendous sea kept rolling after her,

for waves and wind and all were with her now, and she sped before them at the rate of eleven knots an hour; thus it required all the strength of Pedro Barradas and of Noah Gawthrop, who volunteered for it, to hold the wheel, and steer her steadily.

Inspirited by the speed with which his brave ship tore along through foam and spray, Captain Phillips walked briskly to and fro, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his glazed storm-jacket, a gutta-percha speaking-trumpet under one arm, and his jolly red face shining with pleasure and drops of spray, as he glanced alternately aloft, over the quarter, or at Mr. Quail, who smiled approvingly.

"Hurrah, old ship!" said he; "now she goes through it! now she walks along with a will. She smells the Mauritius already, I think."

"The Bird Islands, or the Mozambique, more likely," muttered Pedro to Noah.

"What the devil have we to do with either one or the other?" asked Noah, with sulky suspicion.

"There she goes!" continued the captain; "and on she shall crack as long as her sticks hold together. Mr. Quail, get preventer-braces reeved; ship tackles on the backstays, haul all taut, and belay."

All day the gale held on thus, and about nightfall, when it began to abate into a steady breeze, in which the swinging booms of the lower studding-

sails dipped at times like birds' wings in the brine, the *Hermione* must have run more than 120 miles, and she was about that distance off the most southern portion of the coast of Natal.

How often had Captain Phillips and Mr. Basset wished to be fairly round the Cape of Good Hope—to have doubled it, though it was far away from dear old England; yet it was a necessary feature or point to be achieved in the voyage. They were fairly round the great Cape of Storms now, and the vessel's course was east and northerly, with a calm sea and a fair wind.

Every one should have been in the highest spirits; but, save Ethel and Rose, Morley and his three companions, all were cloudy, anxious, and dull; for Captain Phillips, his officers, and Mr. Basset felt themselves still menaced by secret dangers.

During the most of this day Morley had remained below with Ethel. Rose was working beads on a cigar-case for the doctor, and Tom Bartelot, with Morrison, remained by choice on deck.

"Now that we can be of service, Captain Phillips," said Tom, "we must be allowed to take our turn of duty. I know that sick folks are soon deemed little better than skulkers aboard ship."

"How so?"

"When one has to take a fellow's trick at the helm, another his look-out aloft, or out upon the

booms, a third his watch, and a fourth something else, they soon weary of him."

"True," replied Captain Phillips, in a low voice, as they drew near the break of the deck, and beyond ear-shot of that tall son of Columbia, Mr. William Badger, who was at the wheel, with his very long legs, half-cased in very short trousers, placed very far apart; "but your arrival on board, if a lucky circumstance for you all, has been rather a godsend to me."

"Indeed! How? The ship doesn't look short-handed."

"Ah! here comes Mr. Ashton; and please call your mate here. I have something to say to you all."

Tom beckoned Morrison, who had been busy coiling and belaying some of the running rigging, for the crew had become exceedingly untidy and neglectful.

Badger's keen eyes peered from under his beetling brows, as if he strove to *see*, what he could not overhear, the conversation that ensued, when Captain Phillips detailed the secret state of his crew, and the daring project which the doctor had heard so freely canvassed in the forecastle.

Bartelot and Morrison heard the honest captain's narrative with astonishment and indignation, but Morley with a terror and agony very much akin to Mr. Basset's, under the same circumstances.

"In such a state of matters, why did you not haul up for Table Bay, where some ships of war are sure to be?" asked Bartelot.

"Such was my intention; but the same hurricane that destroyed your ship drove mine too far to the southward. That circumstance made us the means of saving you; but I lost thereby a chance of thinning out, or altogether dispersing the crew, and shipping another."

"Aye, aye," observed Morrison; "what between crews of Lascars and coloured men, Chinese junks and piratical Bornese boats, there are many craft disappear in these seas, and at Lloyd's the typhoons are held responsible for all."

"If that fellow who is at the wheel, and two who are named Barradas, were quietly overboard, I could manage the rest, I think."

"Barradas! are they Spaniards?" asked Tom.

"Spanish South Americans—two of that bad lot who are so often to be seen loafing about the Liverpool docks."

"Troublesome hands always."

"And these two are among the worst—the very worst. They were chums of that fellow Hawkshaw in Texas and Mexico, at the gold diggings, and elsewhere, it would appear. They are two brothers, named Pedro and Zuares—at heart, pirates both."

"Barradas!" said Morley, striving to remember; "that name seems familiar to me."

"Have you forgotten the name of the old hermit —the 'darvish,' as Noah called him—whom we buried on the island, and whose papers I read to you?" asked Morrison.

"Don Pedro Zuares de Barradas," said Bartelot.

"I remember now. I have his Spanish cross below," said Morley. "Good Heavens! if these should be his sons! The names are the same. How singular!"

"And they were comrades of Hawkshaw, you say, Captain Phillips?"

"Comrades, or shipmates, or something—nothing good, you may be assured."

And now Morley, just as Dr. Heriot joined them, recalled Hawkshaw's strange story of how the one named Zuares committed—unwittingly, however—the awful crime of matricide, in the Barranca Secca —that savage story which he related on a summer evening in Acton Chase, to the Bassets and Pages; and now, by a strange fatality, their lot was all cast together within the narrow compass of a single ship, upon the wide and lonely sea.

"These are most calamitous tidings," said Morley, in a low and troubled voice, as he passed his arm through Heriot's, and drew him aside; "love, they

say, laughs at danger; but here, Dr. Heriot, love may weep," he added, almost with a groan.

"Hang it, man, call me Heriot—Leslie Heriot, or whatever you like; but drop the doctor, it sounds so precious stiff, especially when—when we both love these two girls."

"Well," said Morley, who, as an Englishman, had his local or national prejudices, but meant to be complimentary, "for a Scotchman, you are a nice fellow, Heriot; but—but Ethel and Rose, what are we to do now?"

"Fight to the last gasp for them, that is all," replied Heriot, stoutly.

While they were conversing thus, Noah Gawthrop approached Captain Bartelot, and, in his own fashion, began to state that he had heard some strange hints dropped by the watch at night, by others that lounged about the windlass-bitts and forecastle; that some of the crew had been whetting their knives on the carpenter's grindstone, that all were on the alert, and were, he added, "sartainly up to summut that looked like squalls, or mischief."

As an old man-o'-war's man, Noah knew well how unpleasant was the reputation of being a tale-bearer, and that, if it was bad ashore, it was deemed ten times worse at sea; but in the *Aurora* he had acquired certain ideas of discipline which

had never left him, so he considered that he was only doing his duty in this matter.

"What do you mean to do, your honour?" he asked of Captain Phillips, in a husky whisper.

Phillips gave him a grim smile, and showed the butt of a revolver in his breast-pocket.

"Oh, the poor girls below," said Morley.

"I have perilled my life many times, young gentleman," said Phillips—"many times on land, but oftener still on the great highway of waters, and, though scared a bit, I ain't going to be frightened now; and, believe me, my ship shall not be taken without a scrimmage. Let these mutinous curs come on and do their worst, I'm ready for them—life for life, and man to man."

"Hooray, and the *Haurora* for ever. Beat to quarters—them's my sentiments," said Noah, with a voice so loud that long Badger, at the wheel, craned his scraggy neck to listen, and opened his eyes and ears very wide indeed. "D——n their limbs! I hopes to see 'em all with their ears nailed to the mainmast, and here's the fist as will handle the hammer and nails."

As he made this unwise exclamation, he stepped aft, to relieve Badger at the wheel, and that ungainly personage, avoiding the group who were at the gangway, passed forward to the forecastle, where he at once informed his colleagues that he

"raythe reckoned that old man-o'-war shark had blowed the whole affair upon them."

Deeply-muttered oaths and vows of vengeance on poor old Noah were the immediate result.

"*Por mi honor!*" exclaimed Pedro, who was polishing the blade of his knife on the sole of his shoe; "so, so, this is what old sticking-plaster is up to—eh?"

"In course, my Spanish gamecock."

"*El espio y picaro!* (spy and scoundrel)," said Pedro, grinding his teeth.

"The old corksucker!" growled the rest, using in this the most opprobrious epithet known at sea.

"He's a old man-o'-war's man, and, I reckon, has got notions o' discipline, doffing his hat to the quarter-deck, and other darned nonsense whipped into him, nigger fashion, by the boatswain's cat. To try gettin' over such fellows is summut like reefing of a stun'sail, or anythin' else that's next to useless."

Having delivered himself of this aphorism, Badger proceeded to "darn" sundry parts of Noah's person, such as his eyes and limbs, and by the unanimous vote of all he was consigned to very warm latitudes indeed.

Amid this, the ship's bell struck. It was the appointed time—four bells in the second dog-

watch—and then, pale as a spectre, or looking like an evil spirit whom the sound had summoned—Cramply Hawkshaw descended through the scuttle into the little apartment, or fore-cabin, a close and squalid den, where his appearance was greeted with shouts of ironical welcome and applause, in which the watch on deck joined.

We have already detailed a scene in this unpleasant quarter of the ship; but have little desire to rehearse another, and so shall be brief.

With a mocking grimace on his moustached lip, and a ferocious gleam in his wild black eyes, Pedro presented Hawkshaw to the crew as a new *companero amigo*—associate and friend.

"Hitch in, mates—make room for the capting," said Badger, drawing in his long, lean, and misshapen legs. "So having 'ad a spell in limbo aft, you're bound for the bunks for'ard, eh? Come, Pedro, prodooce the dev'l's bones—let him have a shy with the ivories. I reckon he's got an eye on the gals aft, as well as ourselves; and I say, capting—Jeerusalem! ain't the black eyes o' that oldest gal regular Broadway shiners!"

In his misery and rage, Hawkshaw had slunk forward, and joined the crew with two ideas uppermost in his mind: that he would yet revenge himself on Morley Ashton, and might also have the haughty Ethel at his mercy—that she yet might be

his, and his only, despite fate, fortune, and friends, and despite her own aversion for him.

But when he found himself among this crew of desperadoes, whose obscene lips bandied about the names of those so pure and gentle, fair and tender, as Ethel and Rose Basset, the old times of Laurel Lodge came to memory, and though bad, hardened, and desperate, Hawkshaw felt his soul die within him.

But it was too late for receding now!

Criminal though he was, to find himself the chosen comrade and companion of these wretches, filled up the full measure of his misery; but no sympathy can be wasted on him, when we remember the crimes of which he had been guilty, and the keen suffering he had caused to Ethel, to Morley, and to others.

In mockery, and in a pretended spirit of good fellowship, Pedro's loaded *dados* were produced from his sea-chest, and they proceeded again to cast lots for wives among the women in the cabin, amid roars of laughter, cheers, and other noises, while, to enhance the general din, Mr. Badger smashed the mess-beef kid, dashed the butter gallipot to pieces, and danced a hornpipe on the tin bread-barge.

This noisy laughter was heard distinctly in the cabin.

"Surely that sounds jolly and well," said Tom Bartelot, as the party from the deck entered it;

"fellows who laugh so loudly cannot mean much mischief."

"Ah, you don't know them," said Captain Phillips, in a low voice.

"Mischief?" said Ethel, looking up inquiringly.

"What, is it possible that you don't know?" Morley was beginning, when Mr. Basset placed a finger on his lip warningly.

Those extremely hilarious sounds in the forepart of the ship were simply caused by the lots for sweethearts or wives being cast anew.

Ethel had fallen to Pedro Barradas, thanks to his peculiarly-constructed dice; Rose fell to the share of Bill Badger; and Nance Folgate, the old nurse, to Hawkshaw; and hence the yells and screams of laughter that ascended from the fore-scuttle, and rang upon the still and starlight night.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE CRISIS AT LAST.

On the morrow, a gale like that we have described carried the ship still farther on her course; but again, towards evening, the sea and wind went down together, and a calm and lovely night stole over the world of waters.

Morley had intended to speak to the two Barradas about what he suspected—his knowledge of their secret history. Had he found an opportunity for doing so, much evil would, perhaps, have been averted, as he might have exercised a little influence over them; but one time they were aloft in the rigging, at another, tarring down the backstays, clapping on chafing gear, or otherwise occupied most of the day, as they now began to feel a *personal interest* in the ship; so no opportunity occurred, and the fatal evening of the intended mutiny crept on.

And, notwithstanding that he was a quiet and peaceable man, and possessed of much of the caution usually attributed to his countrymen, matters were

precipitately brought to a crisis by Morrison, Tom Bartelot's Scotch mate, as we shall soon have occasion to show.

On this night our old friend was at the wheel, as a volunteer; and, as the atmosphere was singularly calm, Morley and Ethel, Rose and Heriot, were on deck, sometimes seated in pairs, conversing in low and confidential tones, or promenading, arm-in-arm, between the break of the deck and the taffrail.

Mr. Basset and the captain were smoking near the companion-hatch, Mr. Quail had turned in below, and the second mate, Foster, had charge of the ship, whose lofty spread of snow-white canvas shimmered with a weird effect in the light of the rising moon, which heaved up at the horizon, the size of three European moons—sublime and vast—to shed a blaze of silver radiance far across the sea.

Noah's hints had already made Captain Phillips take in his studding-sails and royals, so the ship was now running snugly and easily, under the fore and main-course, topgallant-sails, jib and spanker.

Ethel sat silently, with her hands clasped on Morley's left arm, for the moonlight on the water, the stars above, and his familiar voice, made her think of home, and the beautiful garden at Laurel Lodge, with its ribbon-borders of pinks, mignonette, and scarlet geraniums; its roseries, its gigantic sweet peas, her sister's boasted azaleas, which Hawk-

shaw had ridiculed in an evil hour; its avenues of laurels and stately old sycamores.

She now drew forth her mother's miniature, which she wore in her breast, at the end of a slender gold chain. It had been taken in that dear mother's youth, when she closely resembled Ethel herself.

Who that surveyed that soft, bright, smiling face, could realise the idea that it was the image of one who had long been dead, and had passed away.

So, as Ethel gazed upon it, her mother's figure, expression of face, and tone of voice, the embodiment of that gentle friend and loving mentor, all a mother should be, "the best and most beautiful of earth's creatures," rose to memory, strangely mingled with recollections of her death and of her funeral, on a sunny day, in peaceful Acton churchyard, while the familiar bell tolled solemnly in the old grey Norman tower, and when the turf looked so green, the fresh earth so brown, and that awful and mysterious grave, as it yawned beneath the old yew tree, so deep, so terrible!

Then there was the reverend rector, her father's dearest friend, reading the beautiful and impressive service for the faithful departed, while his voice faltered and his eyes glistened. It was the last day of an English autumn, when the leaves of the tall oaks in the Chase, and the foliage of every coppice, were brown and crisp, and when all the world

seemed hushed and still; when even the village urchins who clambered on the churchyard wall were mute, and sat uncovered, and no sound stirred the air but the rector's voice, and the solemn bell that boomed in the time-worn tower, and shook its ivy leaves.

So all that sad and mournful day came vividly back and unbidden to memory now.

"Mamma, dear, dear mamma! she did so love you, Morley!" said Ethel, as she closed the miniature, and placed it tenderly in her bosom.

Inspired by livelier thoughts on the other side of the quarter-deck, merry Rose Basset and the doctor were leaning over the bulwarks, and watching the luminous animacula that gleamed in the passing waves.

In the second chapter of our history, we have related how Mr. Basset had considered the early engagement between Morley Ashton and Ethel the mere fancy of a boy and girl—a fancy which separation, or the spirit of change, might cause to wear away and be forgotten.

But now, by his most providential restoration, by the strength of their mutual regard, by what the poor fellow had undergone; by what Ethel, too, had suffered, and, more than all, by the necessity for securing her future happiness, he felt himself bound to do the utmost in his power to advance Morley's

interests, when they all reached their new home in the Mauritius, and a reiterated promise to this effect had made the young pair supremely happy.

Rose and the doctor were the next consideration; what was to be done with them?

The excitement consequent to recent events; the expected outbreak among the crew; the discovery of the wreck, its occupants, and their story, together with Hawkshaw's villainy, had so fully occupied the attention of all on board, that Heriot had scarcely found an opportunity for broaching a matter, which Captain Phillips's jokes had quite prepared our friend, the judge, to have laid before him, for his earnest consideration and kindly sympathy—neither of which he had quite made up his mind to accord; but Rose had always flirted with some one; and when two favourable occasions came to pass, Heriot was dissuaded by her thoughtlessly saying:

"Now, don't bother yet, my dear old darling Leslie," for this was her unromantic style ("a jolly one," the doctor thought it) of addressing him.

Mr. Basset would have been blind indeed, had he not seen the growing intimacy which existed between them; but he had no idea that matters had proceeded the length of interchanged promises. Neither did he observe the ring which Rose now wore on her engaged-finger—to wit (for the in-

formation of the uninitiated), the third of the right hand; and to use a hackneyed phrase, "as fairy" a finger as ever rejoiced in that pleasant decoration, for among Rose's chief beauties were her hands, plump, white, and tiny.

Recent events, we have said, prevented explanations, or any account of what the doctor's prospects were.

"Not much, they are, certainly, dear, dear Rose," whispered Heriot, as they sat together in the moonlight, while the ship still sped before the wind, with all the reefs out of her topsails. "I have, one way and another, but 100*l.* a year at present. Had I more, I would have sought out a snug practice at home, and not roved about as the surgeon of a sea-going merchantman."

"Then you would not have met me, sir," said Rose, with waggish asperity.

"But I have an uncle, a jolly old fellow, who loves me well, for my mother was his only sister; and he loves me for that, perhaps, rather than any merits of my own."

"My poor modest Leslie! well—and this uncle?"

"When he dies—distant may the day be when he does so!—I shall come into 400*l.* per annum more. If at the Isle of France, I could battle the watch——"

"Battle what?"

"Oh, it is an old college phrase; I mean, fight my way into a practice somehow. With you to cheer me on, we should do very well. Then, an M.D., to get a practice, must have a wife."

"Why?"

"What is the difference between a doctor and a student? 'There is but a degree between them,' says some one; but until the student has the magical letters M.D. added to his name, he is nothing, and even then he will never get the *passe-partout* to private houses, unless he has a wife; and where could I find one dearer, sweeter, more playful and joyous, more charming than——"

"Me, you would say?"

"Yes."

Then here, as no one was looking, there followed a sound which made honest Morrison, who was at the wheel, "prick up his ears," and laugh quietly to himself in the moonlight.

A ship, of course, does not offer the lover-like facilities of shady lanes, green thickets, rosy bowers, or flowery garden walks; but it produces a thousand occasions for polite attention, amidst its rolling, tumbling, and pitching about, its extreme discomfort and peculiarity, which are not given by the solid and immovable earth, and which the fair dwellers thereon do not require; but it is, nevertheless, a very awkward place for indulging in little bits of

osculation—a phrase for which I refer my fair reader to her dictionary, if she knows it not.

All as yet was quiet in the *Hermione*.

The embers of discord were still smouldering amid the crew, and the brave ship flew steadily over the shiny waters of the moonlit sea, her ghostly shadow falling far across them.

Inspired by the calm and beauty of the night, Morrison, as he leaned thoughtfully over the wheel, his left hand grasping an upper spoke, and his right hand a lower one, thinking, perhaps, of his present shattered prospects, without ship or funds, his distant home, and his mother's cottage by the Dee, was singing to himself in a low and plaintive voice.

Ethel looked up and listened, though she scarcely knew the language in which he sang—a portion of a sweet little song (by some local poet), and which he recalled, as we do now, from memory, though perhaps he may have heard it from his mother, to whom this brave and honest fellow was attached with a devotion that was almost childish.

"The tear dims my e'e
As I look to heaven hie,
And sigh to be free
Frae want and frae wae;
But I dinna see the road,
For between me and my God
A darkness has come doon,
Like the mist on the brae.

"The nicht is wearin' past,
The mist is fleein' fast,
And heaven is bricht at last
To the closin' e'e;
In the hollow o' the hill,
The weary feet are still,
And the weary heart is hame
To its ain countrie."

At that moment the ship's bell clanged.

"Stand by to heave the log—relieve the wheel," cried Mr. Foster.

After considerable delay Badger, the Yankee, came slowly shambling aft, to "take his trick" at the helm, and at the same time the whole crew came scrambling noisily up the fore-scuttle, where the watch on deck joined them, and they gathered in a group about the windlass-bitts.

Captain Phillips, Mr. Basset, and Tom Bartelot, exchanged glances of intelligence and inquiry, while the second named, inspired by some miserable foreboding, grew deadly pale.

"You have not hurried yourself, mate," said Morrison.

"No; didn't intend to, I reckon," drawled the Yankee, in his nasal twang.

"Why did you not come aft the moment the bell struck?"

"Now, stranger," said Badger, in a tone of mock expostulation, "d'ye wish your few brains blowed

out with the cook's bellows, or not, that you asks questions or gives orders here?"

"Take the wheel, and take it in silence," said Morrison, haughtily and sternly; for, although no mate on board the *Hermione*, he still felt the habit of authority strong within him.

"I knowed a man at Cape Cod, in the state of Massachusetts," continued Badger, still delaying, and speaking slowly through his long nose; "a Scotchman he was, Mr. Morrison, and the very moral o' you, with a hook nose and chin, that 'ud hold a ginger-nut between 'em, who fed sea-gulls with iron filings, and sold their wings for steel pens. A 'cute crittur! But, as I said, he was called a Scotchman, though I calc'lates he was a Yankee Jew of Hirish parentage."

"If you don't take the wheel, I'll show you the oretop with a vengeance, my fine fellow," said Morrison, who could stand anything but sneers at his country.

"You're riled a bit, you air, and your monkey's getting up. You've been too well fed, mate," drawled Badger. "I reckons that at home, in your own little clearin' of a country, you fed upon fir shavings and cold water. As for decent junk, reg'lar old hoss, and plum-duff, I calc'late you never heerd on 'em afore. Now, in this here craft, as the

junk's atrowcious, so that even an 'ungry Scotchman or a blue shark wouldn't look at it, we mean to have a blow-out to-night in the cabin, and on the best in the steward's locker too."

At that moment Mr. Foster, who, with Joe, had been heaving the log-line, on hearing words, came aft, and took the wheel from the hands of Morrison, who was trembling with suppressed passion.

"Go forward, you rascally carrion," said the Scotchman, "or, by the heavens above us, I soon will make blue sharks' meat of you."

Badger drew his knife, which gleamed in the moonlight, but at the same instant he was laid sprawling on the deck by a blow from the butt-end of a revolver with which Captain Phillips had armed Morrison, and which the latter swung at the full length of his arm and with no unsparing hand.

The cry of rage uttered by Badger was answered by a yell from the forecastle, and all the crew came rushing aft, armed with knives, capstan-bars, and some with pistols, which they had hitherto secreted in their sea-chests.

Below, ladies, below—into the cabin, and barricade the door; quick, quick!" cried Captain Phillips, as Ethel and Rose, to their astonishment and terror,

were hurried, almost thrust down, the companion-stair.

Then several pistol-shots were exchanged, and a furious struggle instantly took place on deck.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### HOW THE SHIP BROACHED TO.

At the time of this outbreak the *Hermione* was, as we have stated, somewhere about 100 miles off the mouth of Algoa Bay, and not, as Pedro had calculated, near the entrance of the Mozambique Channel.

Hurried, actually thrust into the cabin by the hands of Morley Ashton, Dr. Heriot, and others, Ethel and Rose Basset's terror and astonishment may be imagined; and greatly were these emotions increased by the sounds they heard on deck—the sudden uproar, the stamping of feet, as of men engaged in a deadly struggle, the oaths, imprecations, and occasional discharge of pistols.

If Captain Phillips and his friends were disagreeably surprised to find that the crew possessed some four or five old ship pistols, which they had hitherto kept secretly in their sea-chests, they, on the other hand, were much more disappointed on discovering that the officers and passengers were fully prepared for them—alike forewarned and forearmed; and the

sudden appearance of their pistols and revolvers, as shot after shot flashed from them in the clear tropical moonlight, baffled the first rush aft of Pedro and his brother, for most of the crew, following Hawkshaw's prudent example, suddenly retreated to the forecastle, their own peculiar region and quarters.

A ball from Pedro's pistol found a harmless victim, for he shot dead poor Joe the steward. But at the same moment a ball from Heriot's revolver grazed the assassin's left ear, tearing a ring out of it, and as he rushed back with a bewildered air, at first believing himself to be shot through the head, Morrison followed him past the long-boat, showering, with a capstan-bar, such blows upon him as would have prostrated any other man than Barradas, who turned twice upon his pursuer, to whom he opposed in vain his clubbed pistol and the blade of his Albacete knife.

Poor Mr. Foster, who, as related, had taken the wheel from Morrison, was now assailed by Badger, the long Yankee, who had gathered himself up from the deck, where he had lain sprawling.

"Villain!" exclaimed Foster, as he clung to the spokes of the wheel, which he dared not relinquish lest the ship should bring to by the lee, and as he glanced the while with irrepressible agitation at the upheld knife of the wretch who had grasped his collar, and held it at the full length of his long, lean,

muscular left arm. "Villain, would you lift your knife to me?"

"Ah, you 'tarnal Britisher, I would choke you like a weasel," hissed the Yankee through his yellow teeth.

"Do be quiet, Badger," urged Foster, as he thought of his poor wife and little ones asleep in their beds at home. "Have you no pity—no fear?"

"Nayther, I reckon," snivelled the Yankee.

"No conscience?" asked Foster, as he felt the grasp tightening on his collar.

"Conscience be d——! as we say in Californy. I left my blessed conscience at Cape Horn long ago. Do you understand that?" said Badger, ferociously.

Down came the threatening knife, flashing in the moonshine. Foster quitted the wheel and leaped aside, leaving the collar of his jacket in Badger's hand; but the point of the blade gave him a severe slash on the right shoulder.

Filled with rage and fear, the second mate broke away, and plunged down the companion-stair into the steerage in search of a loaded weapon. Tom Bartelot and Mr. Basset followed him, on the same errand, and the crew, believing that a fight had begun, once more made a furious rush aft, and thus, being now minus five of their number, the captain, with Morley, Heriot, and Noah Gawthrop, found

themselves driven, under a shower of blows and missiles, past the break of the quarter-deck, and, ultimately, down below, where they all fell in a heap upon Mr. Quail, who had turned out, half dressed, on hearing the row on deck.

The last to effect a retreat was Morrison, who had emptied the six barrels of his revolver without hitting anyone, but having a capstan-bar, a weapon to which he was more accustomed, he gave way, step by step, with his face to the foe; but ultimately he was beaten down the companion-stair, covered with blood, which flowed from a wound on his right temple.

Fighting inch by inch, there is little doubt that, at this crisis, the crew might have forced an entrance to the cabin, especially if some had entered by the skylight; but now a yell burst from them, followed by a tremendous crash, and the sound as of a vast ruin descending on the deck.

On Foster abandoning the helm, the ship, which had been running with a spanking breeze upon her starboard quarter, broached to; by swinging round, all her sails were taken aback upon the weather-side, the sudden strain was more than her spars could bear, and the fall of a maintopmast, which had been sprung (*i.e.*, split) in a recent gale, brought down the fore and mizzen, with all their yards and hamper, clean off at the cap of each; and thus, in a moment the beautiful *Hermione* was a scene of

as great a ruin and disorder aloft as she was below.

The wilderness of masts, yards, booms, sails, blocks, and gearing that suddenly descended on their heads somewhat cooled the ardour of the crew, and severely injured two or three of them; but Pedro, a thorough seaman, gave instant orders to cut, clear away, and coil up, while, rushing to the wheel, his powerful hands soon made it revolve; the *Hermione's* head fell round, once more the wind came on her quarter, her fore and main courses, jib, and driver swelled out before it, and she stood on, but slowly, crippled and shorn of all her fair proportions.

This unexpected misfortune to the mutineers gave those whom they had for a time vanquished and driven below time to gather their energies, to reload their weapons, consider their position and resources, and to put in requisition those plans originally formed for the defence of the cabin, their stronghold, and chiefly of the two Misses Basset.

The huge trunk, filled with Mr. Basset's law books (which fortunately came too late on board to be shot with other lumber into the hold) was slued round, and jammed across the cabin-door, which was further secured by its usual bolts and fastenings.

Heriot's pair of pistols, two revolvers, a double-barrelled fowling-piece, and a sharp hatchet, were

their only weapons, but they had plenty of ammunition, all made up in cartridges, and so they resolved to expend it to some purpose.

"My ship! my ship! my poor ship! everything seems to have gone to the devil aloft," groaned Captain Phillips, in an agony of rage and mortification.

"Oh, papa—dear papa—what has happened? What means that dreadful noise on deck?" asked Ethel and Rose together, as they clung to their bewildered parent, and saw with alarm their companions' blanched, flushed, and, in some instances, blood-stained faces. Dr. Heriot and Morley Ashton were both bleeding; the former from a scalp wound, and the latter from a cut in the lip. "Oh, papa! tell us what all this means?"

"It means that those infernal villains have risen to murder us all, ladies; but don't be alarmed for all that," said Captain Phillips, as he reloaded his revolver, while a horrible hurly-burly was heard on deck, where the crew, under the orders of Barradas the elder, were cutting away or securing so much of the rigging and spars as might be useful to them, even to bringing on board the jib-boom, which had been snapped off at the cap, and hung in the guys at the end of the whiskers, with the sail drooping in the water; and all the while they worked amid a storm of oaths, imprecations, and threats.

Among other things cast adrift was the body of poor Joe, whose pockets were soon investigated—his pipe, knife, tobacco-box, and a few coppers appropriated by Messrs. Sharkey and Bolter—after which they cast him over to leeward with as much indifference as if he had been a dead gull or bit of "old horse" (*i.e.*, mouldy junk).

Meanwhile, overcome with horror and anxiety for the probable future of his two daughters, poor Mr. Basset was completely bewildered, and, for a time, as Captain Phillips said, "had no more pith in him than an empty sack." Reclined on the stern-locker, he pressed his daughters to his breast, keeping, as if for protection, an arm round each, and he exclaimed more than once:

"Oh God! most merciful of all who show mercy, protect my poor girls."

"He has committed their protection to you, sir," said Tom Bartelot, rather impatiently; "only show a little pluck, like the rest of us, and we shall weather these villains yet—aye, work them to an oil, if they don't fire or sink the ship."

"Oh, what new—what sudden horror is this?" exclaimed Ethel, wringing her hands, and then clasping them over her temples, while she turned her flashing eyes on each in succession.

"No sudden 'orror at all, marm," said Noah Gawthrop, as he tightened his waist-belt, rolled up

the sleeves of his shirt, and looked everywhere about to spit, but, being in the cabin, restrained the impulse; "we've known o' the rig they were goin' to run this long time past."

"And Hawkshaw?" asked Ethel, shuddering.

"Is a leader among them," replied Morley, applying a handkerchief to his bleeding lip. I never had a better opportunity for clearing off old scores than to-night, but somehow he never——"

"Oh, Morley, dear! leave vengeance to other hands," said Ethel, imploringly. "Dear, dear papa," she added, laying her pale brow on Mr. Basset's cheek, "and so it was this knowledge—this horrible dread hanging over you—that has given such a mournful tenderness to your voice and manner for some time past."

Her voice, so mellow and thrilling, pierced poor Basset's heart: he could only answer by his tears.

"Oh, Morley, love!" said Ethel, in a low, beseeching voice, "say something to comfort poor papa."

But Morley could only press Mr. Basset's hand in silence, for, in fact, the poor fellow knew not what to say. Rose had tied her little handkerchief round the doctor's head, and it seemed a more agreeable remedy than the piece of court-plaster he had hastily stuck on his scar.

To Ethel the watchful, mysterious, solicitous, and

almost sorrowful regard which her father had so long exhibited towards herself and Rose was quite accounted for now.

"Oh, my poor papa—my own papa!" she exclaimed, as she threw her arms round his neck, and nestled with her lovely face close to his, "I have no fear of death; I would face it courageously—but you, and Rose, and Morley. Oh, I fear that the blow which kills me may kill you all, too, you love me so much—so much more than I have deserved, dear papa!"

"Alas, Ethel! it is not death only that I fear for you, my sweet and innocent lamb—and Rose——"

"Below there, ahoy!" hailed a hoarse voice down the companion-stair, after the hurly-burly had somewhat ceased on deck.

"It is the voice of that villain, Sharkey," said Quail.

"The murderer of poor Manfredi," added Dr. Heriot.

"Below there, you swabs and cork-suckers! have you all gone to sleep?" hailed the squat mutineer.

"Hollo!" responded Noah, "what do you want, gallows-bird?"

"We want the two girls. Give them up, and come on deck. Tumble up, or it will be the worse for every man jack of you."

"How so, you squab ragamuffin?" asked Captain Phillips.

"We'll drop down the skylight, and make precious short work with you all," was the hoarse response.

"Come on then, one at a time, or all together—we are ready for you," said Captain Phillips.

At the same moment the cover of the skylight was roughly wrenched off, and the chill night wind poured through the cabin, extinguishing the lamp.

A noisy and derisive cheer followed.

"Silence fore and aft. *Por vida del demonio guardad vuestra maldita garulla* (*i.e.*, "Hold your cursed clack"). Ere long I shall let you know who is captain of the ship now," cried a deep bass voice there was no mistaking, and the dark visage of Pedro Barradas was seen looking down, just as Heriot led Ethel and Rose to their cabin, when he whispered to them to take courage, and closed the door. "Surrender, and give up your arms, or I shall set fire to the ship," added Barradas.

"What will you gain by doing so?" asked Captain Phillips, feeling with his fingers if the caps on his revolver were all right, and taking a full sight at Pedro's head, which he could see above the rim of the skylight.

"Gain? Not much, certainly, unless it be vengeance," replied the Mexican, hoarsely.

"Vengeance, you miscreant? Of what can you accuse me? Surely I never wronged you."

"I have nearly lost an ear by the hand of one among you."

"That infliction you brought upon yourself."

"If you do not surrender in less than twenty minutes, I shall fire the ship or scuttle her, and then shove off with all the boats, leaving you to drown like a rat in a trap," continued Pedro.

"Fool, as well as villain, what purpose would that serve, but to destroy you all? Do you know how far we are from land?" asked the captain.

"I know that we are off the mouth of the Mozambique, and will soon make the land by steering nor'-nor'-east," replied the mutineer, with a grin.

"You are wrong, Pedro Barradas—by Heaven you are! We are only off the Bay of Algoa."

"Well, if this wind holds good, and we keep the ship under her courses and lower studdingsails, we will make the channel soon enough for our purpose. But ha, ha! Senor Capitano, do you hear that?" he added, as the sound of axes was heard; "we are starting the main-hatch to get at the bread and spirit room, so while you starve here, we shall drink and be jolly."

Captain Phillips groaned as he heard those sounds, which indicated a further destruction of the ship; but, taking a sure aim at Pedro, he fired! The red

flash and sharp report of the pistol were followed by a yell of rage.

"A miss is as good as a mile," cried Badger, the Yankee; and Pedro, whose cheek was grazed by the ball, replied by firing into the cabin a random shot, which lodged in the table; and now, with pistols and the double-barrelled fowling-piece, there ensued a regular skirmish, in which our friends, in the dark seclusion of the cabin, had all the best of it, the mutineers' mode of warfare being simply a waste of ammunition, as some four or five of them in succession continued to dart past the open skylight, down which they fired at random.

Too terrified to weep, Ethel and Rose, clasped in each other's arms, reclined on their knees against the side of their bed, with poor old nurse Folgate grovelling on the carpet beside them.

Every instant they heard the sharp reports of the pistols, and saw the explosions flashing through the slits in their cabin-door, and all unaccustomed to the horrors of such an event, they could scarcely believe that they were not in a dream.

Who could imagine that such a scene would occur on board of a London ship? But they knew not the evils that attend a mixed crew.

Ignorant of the chances and casualties of voyaging on the deep, Ethel and Rose, but particularly the former, was utterly bewildered by this terrible

episode, in which she found herself and friends involved. Every shot, every sound, made her heart leap for her father and her lover.

She had pictured to herself how, with Morley by her side, she would tend for life the declining years of her only and beloved parent—tend him as her mother would have wished her to do. He, on the other hand, had hoped to tend, watch, guide, and see her and Rose far on the chequered highway of life; but now it seemed as if they were all about to be torn from each other—he to suffer a violent and cruel death, they dishonour and death together.

Rose! Rose! Poor Ethel's soul shrank within her at this crisis; but it was more with fear for dear, merry little Rose than for herself.

For some time the exciting skirmish we have described continued, without anyone being hit, apparently, either above or below, till Morley felt someone close by utter a low heavy moan or sigh, and then fall suddenly and heavily against him.

"Quail—Mr. Quail," he exclaimed, "is this you? Are you hurt—are you hit?"

It was poor Mr. Quail who, unable to reply, fell on the floor of the cabin with blood bubbling from his mouth. A lucifer-match was promptly applied to a candle, a light procured, and the wounded man was laid on the floor of the captain's state-room, where Dr. Heriot soon discovered that he was quite

dead, being shot in the head by a common nail, a proof that the ammunition of the enemy above was running short.

"My God! Poor Quail—his wife and little ones!" exclaimed honest Captain Phillips, with deep emotion. "Oh, gentlemen, when will these horrors end?"

A low groan from Mr. Basset alone replied, and the features of the hapless mate soon grew livid and ghastly in the flickering light of the candle, as the damps and the pallor of death stole over them together.

Meanwhile the crash of axes was heard in the hold, where already some of the mutineers were making their way in search of plunder, through the cargo, hoping to make a breach in the bulkhead and reach the store where the ship's provisions and spirits were kept.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE CABIN ATTACKED.

Some of the mutineers now proceeded to throw various missiles, such as cold shot, ship-buckets, spare or fallen blocks from aloft, the carpenter's paint-pots, and so forth, into the ship's cabin; but only in one instance, when Tom Bartelot received a contusion on the shoulder, from a wooden marline-spike flung at random, did any of these take effect, as our friends lurked securely, pistol in hand, in the recesses of the upper stern-lockers, in the berths, and so forth, but none as yet could foresee where this strife was to end, or who would first come to terms, before the ship was utterly destroyed, as it bade fair to be, if this internal war continued.

Now the voice of Barradas was heard, giving orders to cast loose one of the carronades on the quarter-deck.

"What are they about to do with the carronade?" asked Morley, as he listened intently.

"Lower it between decks, to fire through the

bulkhead," suggested the old man-o'-war's man, Noah.

"But have they any round shot?" asked Morley.

"We have six rounds for each gun round the coaming of the main-hatch," said Captain Phillips, with a very dejected air; "and there are plenty more in the hold. Shot are wanted sometimes in the Indian seas."

"And the powder?"

"Is all kept in a little magazine near the taffrail —the powder required for immediate service, I mean."

"The gun is cast loose," said Bartelot; "if Noah's idea be their game, it is all up with us, as they may bowl us to death without danger of resistance."

"Unless when they are at work in the hold, we make a sally, regain possession of the deck, ship on the main-hatch, and smother the whole brood!" said Phillips, with a more savage emotion than ever before glowed in his kind and jolly breast.

A few minutes of painful suspense served to show that the intentions of the mutineers were quite different.

They were heard to break open the powder magazine, and load the carronade, which, with loud yells, and much vociferation, they urged forward to the

rim of the skylight with such force as nearly to break the framework to pieces, and over it, by using capstan-bars as levers, they levelled and depressed the gun, by hoisting up the hind wheels of the carriage, and driving home quoins under the breach, till the muzzle was at the angle of forty-five degrees, and pointed almost towards the bulkhead of the little cabin in which Ethel and Rose were weeping and praying.

Scarcely a moment was given for question or consideration, ere Quaco, the black Virginian, came rushing aft from the caboose, with his sable cheek-bones shining, and his yellow eyes aflame, as he flourished a red-hot poker, which, as an extempore match, he applied to the touch-hole.

A sudden and blinding flash, with a cloud of suffocating smoke, filled all the cabin, and there was a report, or concussion, which made the ship reel to her centre; a hundred splinters seemed to fly in every direction, but still no personal danger was done, though the gun had been charged, not with round shot, but with a bag of nails, nearly all of which crashed through the centre of the mahogany table, and lodged in the deck below.

It was not until the first blink of dawn that those in the cabin knew this; their first idea being, that a round shot had been sent through the vessel's bottom; but, mad and furious though the mutineers

were, there was a method in their proceedings, and to utterly destroy the ship was no part of their daring plan.

Wailing cries of terror came from the ladies' cabin, and wild and noisy ones from the old nurse; but no one was hurt there, though all were nearly stifled by the smoke of the discharge, ere it rose slowly through the open skylight, and floated away into the still night air.

As the sailors were withdrawing the gun, taking advantage of its recoil, a volley of pistol-shots from below whistled about them, and Dr. Heriot, with a steady aim of the fowling-piece, sent a charge of buck-shot from both barrels into the face and shoulders of one fellow, who was immediately borne forward to the care of Quaco, who, greatly to his own delight, and with all the mingled fun and cruelty peculiar to his dingy race, proceeded to extract them from the bleeding wretch, more curiously than skilfully, with the prongs of a carving-fork.

They now lashed the gun to its port again, and retired forward, to consult probably.

The ship's bell was no longer struck to call the watches, but the man at the wheel was regularly relieved, and, though sometimes exposed to shots from the cabin, he was never fired on. Under her courses and other lower sails, the ship was steered

to the north-east, but her exact course those in the cabin knew not, as the tell-tale compass had gone to wreck long ago, under the missiles showered so liberally through the skylight.

By the sounds that came aft from time to time, it was evident that the crew were eating, drinking, and making merry in the region of the forecastle; but the fears of those in the cabin were increased by this hilarity, which increased the evil chances that overhung the ship, if a gale came on, and found her with her crew and rigging in such a state of disorder, and half the main-hatch open!

As day dawned, and the armed lurkers in the once trim cabin looked around them, its aspect filled them with exasperation and dismay.

The mahogany table, polished to perfection by poor Joe, was split, and literally torn to pieces by the contents of the carronade; and below it, the planks were thickly sown with nails. All the missiles we have enumerated, the fire buckets, double and single blocks, six-pound shot, holystones, and "prayer-books," &c., encumbered the floor; and there, cold, white, and ghastly, lay the stiffened corpse of the unfortunate Mr. Quail, with many a spot and patch of blood, that had dropped from the cuts and scars of his companions.

Taking advantage of the lull in the hostilities, Morley, Bartelot, and Noah Gawthrop added all the

missiles that strewed the floor to the barricade behind the cabin-door; Mr. Foster procured more caps and ammunition for their fire-arms; Heriot prepared plasters and bandages for their flesh wounds and bruises, while Mr. Basset and the captain took some wine-and-water, with biscuits, to Ethel, Rose, and their old attendant, as the only breakfast they had to offer. After this, unknown to their fair friends in misfortune, Morrison and Foster made preparations to launch the mortal remains of the poor mate into the deep.

No time was there then for prayer or homily.

The body was simply rolled up in a blanket taken from his own bed, lashed tight at the head and foot with a piece of rope. To the ankles were lashed four of the shot with which the rascals on deck had favoured them; and, opening one of the large windows next the rudder-case, they permitted the body to drop gently, feet foremost, into the pale-green water that seethed under the counter.

It could be seen sinking slowly far down into the depths of the morning sea, where it vanished; but not soon enough to elude the keen instinct of some Cape pigeons and albatrosses, which gathered, with ravening beaks and flapping wings, about the place where the corpse went down, and where but a few spreading ripples appeared upon the trough of the rolling waves.

By her frothy wake astern, the *Hermione* seemed to be going through the water at the rate of six knots an hour, for the breeze was fresh and steady.

Some cold beef from the locker of poor Joe, and a glass of brandy-and-water, were served round for breakfast; and none spoke, though all thought of how they would fare when the last drop of water in the cabin was gone!

So passed the noon.

The ill-fated ship still ran north-eastward, increasing hourly, as Captain Phillips said, her chances of being overhauled by some homeward-bound ship —a chance on which their hopes of succour mainly depended now.

END OF VOL. II.

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